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# Alternate Routes

A Critical Review Vol. 4 1980

**Elections, State Policy and the Marxian  
Tradition in Political Sociology**  
An Interview with Robert Alford

**The Struggle for Equal Pay for Work  
of Equal Value**  
Stella Lord

**Knowledge and Power**  
Robert White

**The Limits of Keynesianism**  
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**The State of Cultural Theory**  
Debra Clarke

ALTERNATE ROUTES

*A Critical Review*

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*Alternate Routes  
Department of Sociology and Anthropology  
Carleton University  
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#### EDITORIAL STATEMENT

Alternate Routes is a critical review of sociology and related disciplines. We strive to publish the critical work of graduate students which will inform and be of interest to students and teachers of social science. In our view, sociologists must be critical, both of their own society and of the work of other social analysts. We seek, therefore, to publish work which challenges existing sociological and societal orthodoxies. To achieve this goal we require manuscripts. We encourage graduate students among our readers to submit essays, reviews, commentaries and rejoinders on a wide variety of subjects. We particularly welcome work which treats some aspect of Canadian society within the wider concerns of critical social science.


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# Elections, State Policy and the Marxian Tradition in Political Sociology: An Interview

Robert Alford

## Introduction

Like the discipline in general, political sociology in North America has undergone considerable change since the early 1960s. In his career and publications, Robert Alford reflects many of those changes, which are of more than merely historical interest for scholars working in political sociology.

Alford is probably best known in Canada for the published version of his doctoral thesis, Party and Society: The Anglo-American Democracies. In this comparative study of "class voting" in Great Britain, Australia, the United States and Canada, he found that Canada scored lowest on the index of class voting. Although not always welcomed or accepted by them, this seminal work has provided subsequent Canadian scholars with an agenda for debates on the methods, conceptions, indicators and

explanations concerning the presence of class in Canadian elections.<sup>1</sup>

From these early pluralist beginnings, Alford went on to study the development of health policy in New York, from what might be called an elite perspective, and later to studies of political participation and urban politics from a broadly Marxian perspective, critical of both elite and pluralist approaches. Along the way, an article on paradigms in political sociology summarized some of the differences among these approaches.<sup>2</sup>

The transformations represented by Robert Alford's career, which reflect and are part of broader changes in political sociology, are of more than historical interest because he has attempted to combine the insights, levels of analysis and concepts of pluralist, elite and Marxist approaches into a perspective able to deal with the complexities of politics in liberal democracies. The interview is presented in the hope that it will stimulate thought and discussion on the relationships among voting, the operations of state agencies, capital accumulation, and social class. Directions for further work are indicated tentatively in the interview, but they need to be developed in theoretical reflection and empirical research on politics in Canada and elsewhere. That the interview ends abruptly, with loose ends left dangling, is thus appropriate.

Robert Alford was interviewed at Carleton University on March 20, 1980, by Jim Conley.

1. E.g. R. Ogmundson, "Party Class Images and the Class Vote in Canada," American Sociological Review 40 (1975): 506-512.
2. See the interview for references.



J.C. To start from the beginning, you are probably best known in Canada for Party and Society,<sup>1</sup> where you compare class voting in Canada, the United States, Great Britain, and Australia. As you no doubt know, it continues to inspire work by Canadians such as John Myles and others. Your recent work seems to take a starting point that's a long way from the pluralist assumptions that were behind Party and Society. That change seems to reflect wider trends in political sociology in North America. How do you explain this change in North American sociology, and perhaps in Robert Alford? Second, do you consider the kind of voting study you did in Party and Society to be worthwhile still? If it is and you were to do it today, would you do it differently? In what ways? How would you analyse the electoral system and elections in liberal democracies?

R.A. Those are large questions and it is a little hard to formulate a coherent and well-developed answer on the spur of the moment. I suppose the quick and easy, but basically accurate answer to the first one is that the change in my own perspective does reflect certain trends in North American political sociology. Old problems have persisted and new crises have emerged which cannot be theoretically understood or politically dealt with in the framework of existing political theories or mechanisms for liberal reform. That's the quick answer. I think the change in sociology is more marked than in other social sciences partly because of the more diverse intellectual traditions within sociology. Historically, sociology always has been more

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<sup>1</sup> (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1963)

influenced by Marxist or neo-Marxist ideas. Even people who have been pluralists have always included some aspects of analysis of the class structure. Lipset is the best example. I think his Agrarian Socialism is a very important work. Whatever criticisms you can make of sociology, many in the field recognize the importance of class interests and the class structure for state policy. The critical tradition is not alien to sociology; it remains dormant under some historical conditions and re-emerges under others.

With respect to the second part of your question, elections and voting are not merely devices to control or co-opt popular struggles. They are important democratic institutions, however much they are biased and distorted through the ways in which participation is rendered fictitious and despite the fact that voting and party competition have relatively little effect on major developments. My answer is that voting studies are important, and I don't think they have to be done within a pluralist perspective.

I haven't really thought about the issue of how I would do Party and Society differently. That book differed from the classic pluralist analyses of voting in the sense that I was analyzing class voting as an attribute of the system, rather than examining the factors predisposing individuals to vote in a certain way. The "Columbia" and "Michigan" traditions were primarily interested in the determinants of the voting decision.<sup>2</sup> You have on the one hand the concern of the Michigan school with issues, candidates and party identification as the triple determinants of individual behavior.

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<sup>2</sup>The classic studies respectively are: Bernard Berelson, et al., Voting (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1954) and Angus Campbell, et al., Elections and the Political Order (NY: Wiley, 1966).

On the other hand, you have the more institutional concern of the Columbia school with cross-pressures and the impact of religion versus class in the earliest studies. Because I was a student of Lipset's I drew more upon the Columbia tradition in my dissertation, but I transformed it into a structural analysis of an attribute of the system and not of a set of individual variables predicting individual voting. I still think that was the right way to do it. With different measures, in the light of John Myles' critique of the index of class voting<sup>3</sup> and with more theoretically self-conscious and empirically adequate indices of the social base of parties in different regions and nations, such studies can still be useful. Now given the line of development of my more recent work, I would look for the links of voting much more with state policy, the political strategies of elites and the changing class situation in particular political units. I now would use a much broader theoretical framework for the analysis of elections and voting.

J.C. I found what you said earlier about elections being important a bit surprising. Although it may simply be my reading of it, the paper on political participation and public policy you did with Roger Friedland<sup>4</sup> gives me the impression of a concentration on the symbolic effects of voting and similar forms of political participation, and an emphasis on the social control aspects rather than the policy effects of political participation.

R.A. I absolutely agree; I think you stated the point of that article correctly. But elections have both aspects: they are genuine democratic

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<sup>3</sup> John Myles, "Differences in the Canadian and American Class Vote: Fact or Pseudo-fact," American Journal of Sociology 84, No. 5, March 1979, pp. 1232-1237.

<sup>4</sup> "Political Participation and Public Policy," Annual Review of Sociology, Vol. I, 1975, pp. 429-479.

institutions because they provide equal rights to participate to all citizens and because their outcome installs a regime with great potential power over important decisions. The fact that they are genuine gives them great symbolic power as an instrument of social control. That's the paradox.

Elections have an impact: Proposition 13 in California is a good recent example. It was an overwhelming demonstration of the electoral power of the people. This particular decision had reactionary consequences, but the referendum shows people that their vote has an impact. Elections and the machinery of voting, and the biennial and quadrennial spectacles of party competition around congressional and national elections in the United States do absorb the political attention of the population. In that sense they are like sports events: the symbolic function of elections that Murray Edelman and Ike Balbus, among others, have emphasized. But they wouldn't have that effect if they did not have genuine and real political import as well. If elections were purely spectacle and thus only symbolic, they would not have that impact.

J.C. In a recent paper<sup>5</sup> on the urban fiscal crises, or better, on urban fiscal strains and the way crises are created out of them, you and your co-authors try to analyse the forces making for a rise in public expenditures. In the context of neo-conservative or reactionary attacks on public expenditures (particularly social services) exemplified by Proposition 13, which seem to be able to mobilize many people against the visible sources of their personal fiscal strains of taxes, etc., that sort of analysis seems

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<sup>5</sup>Roger Friedland, Frances Fox Piven, and Robert R. Alford, "Political Conflict, Urban Structure and the Fiscal Crisis," Intl. Journal of Urban and Regional Research, Vol. 1 #3, Oct. 1977, pp. 447-471.

an important topic for left sociologists. They are politically important, but as you and your co-authors note at the end of that article, in the absence of any mass movements of political change, they seem also to be politically impotent. Do you see that sort of analysis connecting up in any way to political movements, and in more general terms, what role does sociological analysis have in this kind of situation?

R.A. Well, you're asking three or four related but somewhat different questions. I do think that our point was an important one, namely that there is a potential political basis for challenges to the cuts in public and social services. But I don't see that our analysis or others like it have had much direct impact in mobilizing a reaction to them. The connection between research and intellectual analyses and political movements has always been a highly indirect and mediated one, so that the role of critical analyses of particular policies and their impact in enlivening a movement or providing ammunition for it is quite unclear.

J.C. It is also a question that seems to have plagued sociologists. They usually seem to have been particularly concerned about the social and political effects of their work and often try to give what they do some political relevance. It is very obvious in the case of Piven and Cloward's Poor People's Movements,<sup>6</sup> where the analysis is intended to inform the strategy of that sort of movement. It is less clear in the case of most other work, but there still seems very often to be some political impetus.

R.A. Of course Piven and Cloward are among the few Left social scientists who have been actively involved in the movements that they write

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<sup>6</sup> (New York: Vintage Books, 1979)

about. As you know they were instrumental in helping to shape the Welfare Rights Movement and earlier Cloward helped form Mobilization for Youth in New York City. But it is unclear what their analyses contributed as opposed to their own presence as organizers. It may be that sociologists have to participate directly in order to have an impact, like anybody else.

J.C. We've already spoken indirectly about a flowering of Marxist sociology in North America. As a paradigm in sociology, is Marxism a fragile flower always in danger of fading, or is it a fairly hardy young weed that will strongly resist any attempts to get rid of it? What are the strengths and weaknesses of Marxist theory and research in sociology?

R.A. That question presupposes an answer to a question that you didn't ask. I think it's a mistake to talk about Marxist sociology, because I think that implies that Marxism is a sufficiently comprehensive and adequate theory by itself on which to base an analysis of society. Marxist concepts are intrinsically interdisciplinary, and for Marx they belong to a "critique of political economy." Even that currently popular phrase--"political economy"--seems to me in some ways to be untrue to the spirit of Marxism as a critique of the partial theories that derive from the arbitrary disciplinary boundaries of the social sciences and history. There is also another reason why speaking of "Marxist sociology" is not a good idea. I think such a usage reinforces and maintains lines of antagonism within political and theoretical debates that are not healthy. That is, it tends to set up a polarization between people who are willing to include themselves as Marxists and those who are then willy-nilly in a non-Marxist camp, I think that is politically and theoretically dangerous.

To answer your question rephrased, I would regard Marxism as an intellectual tradition that should be available and dealt with seriously by all sociologists as a very important component both of the education of students and available for people to deal with regardless of the problem they are working on. Given that, I would say that the Marxist theoretical tradition is developing and likely to have more and more influence, if it avoids the double tendencies towards self-ghettoization and repression: the exclusion of people who use the Marxist tradition from jobs, or the intimidation of those who have jobs. While political repression is certainly not created by sectarianism, it is at least made possible to some extent by the tendency of the Left to fragment and become hostile sects.

You asked about the strengths and weaknesses of Marxism as a paradigm in political sociology. Let me speak to the strengths first. First, in a Marxist analysis crises of the state are not simply exogenous phenomena that burst upon the scene like a storm but are explainable within the structure of the theory and of the society. Second, class relations and class conflict are recognized directly and centrally as having an independent causal impact on state policies and state structures. Organizations of both capital and of the working class are regarded as among the fundamental forces at work in society, both to shape its structure and to bring about change. To start from those premises as starting points of analysis I think is a contribution of fundamental importance.

The main deficiencies of Marxism in political sociology are that Marxism has no satisfactory theory of the state or of democracy. The recent attempts to develop a concept of the relative autonomy of the state do not go far enough in recognizing the internal dynamics of the state. Once institutionally established, separated by the very requirements of capitalist rule, the state

cannot be understood in any direct way as representing the interests of the capitalist class. That is recognized in general by the formula "relative autonomy of the state" but not in practical analysis. In concrete analyses these tend to fall back on either an "instrumentalist" or a "structuralist" perspective, either to discover to what extent agents of the capitalist class are directly present in the making of state decisions or to assume that the structure of the state in the "last instance" serves or represents the interests of capital as a whole. Neither of these assumptions is a good starting point for analysis.

J.C. If I'm not mistaking your position, your solution to that problem is basically to look at the consequences of state policy, at who benefits from state policy. That leaves the question of who is served by state policy open, but it doesn't avoid the functionalist trap of going from who benefits to an implied causal mechanism. The only way to avoid that is to go back and look at the causes of state policies, and it seems to me that the so-called structuralist theory of the state is at least starting to do that. You're correct that there is still this assumption that in the last analysis (a nice loophole) the state will serve the capitalist class or a fraction of the capitalist class. But there is starting to be a recognition, e.g., in Poulantzas' State, Power, Socialism,<sup>7</sup> that you have to look at the mechanism by which that happens and an implicit question of whether that is always going to happen.

R.A. Well, it is certainly inadequate to say "to look at the mechanism" because that formulation still accepts the assumption that "that happens" (i.e. the function for capital) in the normal political process. That assumption is precisely what has to be questioned. That is the theoretical inadequacy of the Marxist tradition at

<sup>7</sup>London: NLB, 1978.



this time. I'm obviously gliding over the significant differences among Marxists with respect to this question, e.g., among Miliband, Poulantzas, and O'Connor, that Leo Panitch and others have been trying to specify and which are very important.

In talking about the consequences of state policy I wasn't saying that approach will solve all the problems because that is not really a theoretical position but rather an "entry point," the point where you analytically enter this complex system and develop a research question which will enable you to ask something quite concrete. The opposite approach is somewhat easier--to postulate, and be right, incidentally--that the causes of state policies and state structures are constrained in some broad way by the fact that the state exists within the capitalist context. But if one examines the consequences of state policies then I think it's harder to accept that theoretical postulate. Both for causes and consequences, the form and level of class conflict--among other factors--have an impact.

I think that in the famous Poulantzas-Miliband debate they're both right. What I mean by that is that Poulantzas is right in arguing that the direct participation of members or agents of the capitalist class is indeed as he puts it "chance and contingent," that it's not necessary for the capitalist class always to be present in order for their interests to be served. But I think Miliband was right in saying that we have to specify the concrete conditions under which specific political elites function and in whose interests they function. You can't postulate that the structure of the state is organized in such a way as to serve capitalist interests either in the short run or in the long run.

J.C. There's a difference of levels then.

R.A. That's right. The issue must be defined as one about the historical conditions under which different class agents must be mobilized to serve their interests. It has to become a historically concrete problem. I would even argue that if you find members of the capitalist class directly present, it is a sign that they are either losing or in danger of losing. That is, only in political and economic crisis must they become active in order to influence policy. If the state is running smoothly, then in effect they don't have to be active (it is even better that they are not active) to have their interests served. I'm not arguing this empirically; this is a theoretical speculation.

Now look at what this theoretical position leads to. Certain kinds of issues are likely to become public, visible, and then politically open to the participation of more groups. In such instances of crisis the situation has the appearance of pluralism, that is, the outcome is genuinely uncertain. Therefore ruling elites and dominant class interests are vulnerable in those moments and must mobilize if the outcome is indeed vital to their interests. Yet the outcome is problematic, because the issues have become public and visible and therefore politicized. That's why "mapping" the whole range of state decisions and state policies is important. Otherwise you tend to have a biased sample of either those issues and decisions which are insulated from popular and democratic influence or those which are highly politicized and in which the outcome is genuinely doubtful.

J.C. In the article about the urban crisis that we've already referred to, the argument is made that there is a segregation between public and politicized issues dealing with what O'Connor<sup>8</sup> calls legitimation and you call political integration, and the insulated ones, out of public view and

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<sup>8</sup>The Fiscal Crisis of the State. New York: St. Martin's, 1973.

concerned with accumulation. Are you saying then that in cases of crisis the ones that are ordinarily insulated become public issues?

R.A. No, not necessarily, but if they do then the balance of political and class forces has shifted and the outcome becomes problematic. We are assuming that we are dealing with capitalist societies that are democratic in the sense that mechanisms of participation do make a difference, if popular interests get mobilized. I'm not at all assuming that the balance of power always shifts in moments of crisis, quite the contrary.

J.C. Both in Health Care Politics<sup>9</sup> and in this urban crisis article, and in contrast to much Marxist writing that tends to see crises as more or less automatic results of tendencies of the system, you appear to be arguing that crises are created by elites as a way of resolving strains that exist within the state.

R.A. I guess this might be looked at as the transposition into the state of what Marxists used to call in the economy a "shakeout," i.e., the destruction or elimination of the less efficient firms in the economic crisis. Maybe political crises have that same character, as a way of getting rid of the less efficient state agencies.

J.C. It sounds awfully conspiratorial.

R.A. No, not necessarily. I don't think we intended to imply (although we may have come close to it) that crises were that free floating and could be created by political elites almost at their will. Certainly not. Different interests are strategically located at different places to take advantage of crises and to exacerbate them, to define them ideologically in certain ways

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<sup>9</sup>(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975)

or to use them to get leverage in different ways. Once a situation like that is in existence, the outcome is to some extent open. They may not be able to control the outcome. Popular interests may mobilize and have an impact that could not be foreseen or controlled. And not all crises are created by elites in any direct sense, for example the sort of thing discussed by Piven and Cloward in Poor People's Movements.

J.C. In Party and Society you did a comparative study, and in the urban crisis article called for more comparative studies of such phenomena. It seems very often that Marxists and left sociologists haven't done that, often I suppose because they find that a lot of very basic work has to be done in their own society before any attempt is made to be comparative (such is the case in Canada, I'd say). Do you see much prospect for real comparative work that takes account of the different levels of analysis in political sociology?

R.A. I think this is a general problem for people working in the Marxist tradition and for others. Perhaps it is more difficult for people working in the Marxist tradition because of their refusal to see different levels or different units of analysis as autonomous. The best Marxist analyses are both multi-level and historical, so the problems of comparative analysis are compounded. I'm not sure that it's a good starting point to say that much of the fundamental work has to be done in one society, because you don't know what the criteria for relevance are until you have some sense of comparison. If you're doing a case study of one country, you can quickly get enmeshed in the details which may be unique so that they are not generalizable. If the specific family alliances among elites, say, in Canadian society are completely idiosyncratic and yet have decisively influenced some rather

critical investment decisions, you may not know that unless you've started out with a comparative framework using the economic consequences of ruling class family networks as your problem.

It's a chicken and egg problem to some extent. You don't know what the relevant factors are until you've done the comparative study, but you don't know how to do the comparative study unless you know enough about each case to make the comparison. It depends on the state of knowledge in a particular area as to whether it's better to get the facts straight history of a particular institution or state policy. A lot of groundwork like that certainly has to be done in many areas.

On the other hand, it may be better to start out comparatively, if you are able to develop a comparative framework using theoretical guidelines as to what is relevant. This rather important issue of research design underlines the importance of creating a research group where it's possible to have a genuine division of labour, not necessarily collective work but at least a genuine intellectual division of labour on some of these problems.

J.C. In the sense of people working on different problems or people working in different areas?

R.A. Both. I recommend this approach highly. People in France, Britain, the United States and Canada may be working on pension policy, for example. They get together for an initial conference where they compare notes in a kind of gestalt about the general pattern of the policy making and history of pensions. The process will sensitize them to the dimensions of variability as well as about factors each person is not aware of because some process is absent in their own country. If the research process becomes a quasi-collective division of labour both detailed case studies and systematic comparisons can be done at once in some sense.

I advance that vision of the ideal research process as theoretically desirable but in practice I haven't done any more comparative work than most other people. But I have been involved in an international group trying to work on urban crises. We want to analyze the differences in the specific structures of the state which deal with these problems. In Canada, for example, you could look at the centralization and de-centralization of the state as a political strategy, not as the iron boundaries within which political struggle occurs. The very structure of the state is an object of political and class conflict.

J.C. One question that lies behind some of the questions I've already asked concerns a paper you did on paradigms in political sociology several years ago.<sup>10</sup> In that paper, you appear to simply set out the alternative paradigms without really taking a stand on any of them. In the work you've done since then you do seem to take some position. What I would like you to do is not so much to say that one is better than another (although I want you to do that too), but rather to state the grounds on the basis of which you would say that you should use one paradigm in preference to another. Perhaps you'd have to take all three in any concrete problem.

R.A. The essay you refer to was written in 1973 and it certainly did not take a stand on any of them. It attempted to state the assumptions of the class, elite and pluralist paradigms and contrast their distinctive assumptions and power to explain different aspects of social reality. To some extent I would still take that position, i.e., that there is no adequate general theory. As

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<sup>10</sup> "Paradigms of Relations Between State and Society," in Leon Lindberg, et al., editors, Stress and Contradiction in Modern Capitalism (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1975), pp. 145-160.

I said earlier in the interview, Marxism has no satisfactory theory of either the state or of democracy and can only with great effort be extended to cover some phenomena. They tend to be regarded as residual or unique features of the "social formation" or of the "conjuncture." I don't object to that mode of theorizing as long as it's clear what limited realms of experience and historical evidence the person who is making that statement realizes they are explaining, that other historical processes and factors remain open for investigation and interpretation.

But you're also certainly right that in later writings I come closer to containing what I would now describe as the insights of pluralism within a combination of elite and class perspectives. If I had to describe the nature of a position or a synthesis I would put it that way. The autonomy of groups and the free formation of preferences as in the classic pluralist approach to politics I regard as a useful mode of explanation only within a very narrow range of real political issues. I think there are certain parameters or conditions under which you can describe the outcomes of political conflict using a pluralist model, but those conditions then have to be specified using concepts drawn from essentially a theory which specifies the autonomy of the state structure and the autonomy of the class structure. I realize that's a cryptic statement. You're raising one of the most fundamental epistemological issues, that is, how (if it is possible) to integrate alternative paradigms or perspectives. In effect you're asking me to give you a brief and almost glib synthesis, which is a very difficult thing to do, but I will try.

First, the requirements of legitimation and accumulation in the capitalist state requires that the state be institutionally separated from the economy, that is the state cannot be under the direct and visible control of the capitalist class for various reasons that the neo-Marxists have specified.



Second, once the state is institutionally separated, it becomes internally differentiated into a politicized and de-politicized sector. This differentiation does not happen in ways which necessarily serve the interests of capital. This is the elite component and it is not the same as either an instrumentalist or a structuralist Marxist prediction of the structure.

Now the pluralist element is that the politicized sector is genuinely open to change brought by the demands of diverse social groups. The political energies of the mobilized groups and parties are absorbed in attempts to influence state decisions largely in the politicized sector of the state. You could call it the sector of pluralist politics, which consumes the political energies of the population in certain kinds of reforms. The issues around which it is possible to mobilize, or to have an impact are quite limited. This interpretation is quite consistent with the whole pluralist position. For example, the whole argument of Dahl in Who Governs?<sup>11</sup> (in different language) is that the impact of political action is limited to the political consensus at any given time, to a quite limited set of issues. Now the pluralists do not theorize political consensus: that's their residual category. What accounts for those constraints on the effective range of issues? Very briefly, I think both the internal differentiation of the state structure at any given time and the way in which the state is organized in a larger sense to meet certain kinds of requirement for a capitalist economy limit the impact of political mobilization.

What I have just given is a structural description, not a prediction of any particular outcomes. I've attempted to state the ways in which each theory

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<sup>11</sup> (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961)



locates a particular aspect of reality and explains it with distinctive factors. Again, that's only an approach, only a starting point, but I think it enables one to take into account the incredibly complex and diverse panoply of political actors that get involved in a particular situation, without saying that all the sound and fury of pluralist politics is all of reality, or even the most important part. The other levels still exist at which issues are being decided and benefits allocated. (Incidentally, I am currently struggling with a book which will expand this argument, with many illustrations from the empirical literature.)

J.C. The way you've done it is to go from structures to be analysed in class terms, to the more specific structures of states, such as the segregation of agencies, and finally to the sound and fury of pluralist politics. Presumably you can trace it back then to the effects of pluralist politics on transforming the other levels.

R.A. That's precisely right. If you take seriously the idea that the outcomes of the actual issues that emerge into political conflict are not completely determined by the structure of the system, then one can develop a more adequate explanation for the incredibly internally contradictory and fragmented structure of the state and the diverse public policies it produces.

J.C. And it would account then for circumstances where it seems that the state is not serving the needs of the capitalist class.

R.A. That's correct. This approach argues that if you look at a "cross-section" of the state at any given point in time it will be a reflection simultaneously of the impact of popular mobilization, of working class and other group interests as reflected in various organizations, of the outcomes of the internal strategies of state elites struggling to build bureaucratic empires

and of the direct impact of capitalist class interests either mobilized or not mobilized depending on the existing policy of the relevant state agency. Because the state depends upon economic growth and tax revenue, it's internal processes are biased (in ways the structuralists have stated) toward the interests of capital. The sum total is a highly internally contradictory apparatus. The implication of this approach is that one cannot and should not leap to quick and easy judgments about the overall function of the state.

# The Struggle for Equal Pay for Work of Equal Value: A Case Study

Stella Lord

## Introduction

The concept of equal pay for women has not been tied to the concept of 'value' in most provincial equal pay legislation in Canada. The pay of men in similar jobs in the same establishment has, in most cases, been the criterion for equal pay legislation.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, if women work in sex segregated jobs, or job 'ghettos', they remain outside the present legislation in most Canadian provinces.

Possibly as a natural effect of the women's liberation movement on the one hand and frustration with the slow progress towards effective equal pay legislation on the other, women are now tending to turn to unionization and union militancy to achieve higher rates of pay.<sup>2</sup> Except in one or two isolated instances, however, there have been few explicit demands based on the concept of equal pay for work of equal value.

Moreover, there is little uniformity in the extent to which the

process of unionization itself is successful, or the economic benefits to be gained from it are realized. Unionization amongst nurses has been relatively successful on both counts, whereas unionization amongst bank tellers has been slow, spasmodic and localized, and unions have been unable to make real economic gains. The strike of the Communication Workers (Bell Canada) succeeded in making economic gains, whereas workers at Radio Shack, Fleck and Blue Cross in Ontario underwent long strikes merely to gain union recognition and the right to bargain. Even where women are unionized, therefore, higher rates of pay (to say nothing of general overall parity with male workers) are not achieved without a struggle. Unions, even the most militant and well organized, must face not only the economic power of their employers, but an ideologically structured industrial relations system which is also weighted against radical change in bargaining patterns. Union militancy around the issue of higher wages for women is certainly a step in the right direction. But while it provides a vehicle and a tool for the attainment of equal pay, unless demands are tied to the concept of value there are limitations on what it can do for women working in highly sex segregated jobs and for those with little or no collective bargaining strength. Union militancy, therefore, is not a panacea.

If the concept of equal pay for work of equal value were to become an accepted criterion on which pay rates were to be negotiated, however, it could have wide ranging effects on the status of women in our society, both inside and outside the labour movement. There is also the possibility that it could raise broader, more fundamental, questions about the 'value' of labour. For the concept of 'value' as a measurement for wage rates introduces a criterion which raises a number of questions about the labour market, the collective bargaining system and the

structure of wage rates. More importantly, for women in sex segregated work, it raises the question: what is the nature and function of the work that women have traditionally performed in our society? What is the 'real value' of women's work?

In early October, 1977, Local 31 of the Steel Plate Examiners at the British American Bank Note Company in Ottawa went on strike for equal pay. Their demand was for equal pay with some of the men in their plant whom they contended were doing jobs of considerably less skill and responsibility than their own. There was more than one dollar difference between the full hourly rate of pay of the lowest paid men in the plant and the women. In addition, the male 'floor boys' started at a higher rate of pay and achieved the maximum rate after one year; the women did not achieve their full rate until they had been with the company for two years.\* The Steel Plate Examiners Local was, therefore, demanding a 29.2% increase which would have given them parity with the lowest paid male workers in the plant. During negotiations and until the local went on strike in October, they had only received an offer of 12.8% by the company.<sup>3</sup>

But the strike was more than a strike about a specific wage increase. It was a strike about equal pay and as a result it became (somewhat after the fact) a 'cause celebre' for women's groups inside and outside the labour movement in Ontario. But this was the first strike in which the Steel Plate Examiners local had ever been involved in their thirty year history at the plant.<sup>4</sup> The women, therefore, were fairly inexperienced in organizing for a strike. More importantly, however, because the political significance of their demands were not immediately apparent to them, they did not exploit to their advantage the broader political support of women which might otherwise have been available

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\*Steel Plate Examiners started at \$3.75/hr., reaching a maximum of \$5.00/hr. after two years.

to them. For this, and several other reasons which will be discussed later, the strike was not very successful in meeting their immediate demands. In particular, it did not succeed in changing the company's opposition to recognizing the local's claim to parity with the male workers.

The women went back to work after nine weeks, having only obtained the agreement of the company to submit the dispute to arbitration. On April 13, 1978, Owen Shime, the Arbitrator in the case, made his decision in favour of the company's original offer of 12.8% retroactive to May 1977.<sup>5</sup> In view of the terms of reference of the case, the reasoning behind Shime's decision seemed dubious to the Counsel for the union and it was decided to submit the decision to judicial review. But the Counsel later advised against this because it was felt that the chances of a reversal of the decision would be limited. Instead, it was decided to put the case before the Canadian Human Rights Commission, which had come into being in January 1979 to act as a tribunal court on alleged contraventions of the Canadian Bill of Rights. The decision to go this route was made because it could be argued that the Company was contravening Clause 11 of the Federal Bill of Rights which provides for non-discrimination in pay on the basis of equal pay for work of equal value.<sup>6</sup>

Although the company's main customer is the Bank of Canada, it was not at all clear whether the labour relations of this company would be held to fall within federal or provincial jurisdiction. Nor was it clear whether the Canadian Bill of Rights would take precedence over provincial legislation in labour relations. On February 26, 1980, the Human Rights Tribunal decided 'with regret' that because the labour relations of the company did not fall under federal jurisdiction, the

equal pay clause in the Canadian Bill of Rights could not apply.<sup>7</sup> Since the Minister of Labour for the province of Ontario had already ruled before the strike commenced that the women were "not performing substantially similar work" to the men in the plant, the matter had not been put to the Ontario Human Rights Commission.

For the future, therefore, the Steel Plate Examiners have only two avenues open to them to improve their present position to rely on their own bargaining strength with the company or, together with the opposition parties and labour and women's pressure groups in the province, to put pressure on the government to change the legislation.

In terms of the women themselves and the sustained effort which was demanded of them over the period of 2½ years the outcome was more than just an economic setback, it was a defeat which struck at their own self respect as working women. As a result, the impetus for future struggle around the issue in their local was seriously stunted.<sup>8</sup> In terms of the industrial relations and legal systems within which these women were involved for that 2½ years, there exist serious barriers to the attainment of equal pay which appear to be insuperable. These barriers exist for any group of women working in job 'ghettos', who seek to obtain equal pay for work of equal value through the collective bargaining process.

An understanding of the structural barriers within the collective bargaining route to the attainment of equal pay for work of equal value is essential if these are to be overcome for that goal to be reached. It is proposed in this paper, therefore, to examine in greater detail the collective bargaining/industrial relations process and the political appeal process as these affected the outcome of this specific case. While it will be difficult to generalize beyond this particular case

to any other case as to the final outcome, many of the same structural barriers and sets of assumptions that lie behind these processes will exist in most collective bargaining situations.

### The Case Study

#### 1. Collective Bargaining

##### (a) The workplace, the company and its employees

The British American Bank Note Company is engaged in the business of engraving and printing of high security material such as bank notes, postage stamps, lottery tickets, share certificates and travellers cheques. The Ottawa plant prints mainly bank notes and postage stamps and it is the only one of its four subsidiaries which operates the steel plate presses.<sup>9</sup>

The company has been in operation since 1866 and was incorporated in 1909. It was in the control of the estate of the founder until 1929 when these holdings were bought out privately. Shares were not offered on the stock exchange until 1945. Since 1967 the Company has been involved in a number of acquisitions and takeovers and has recently experienced expansion in sales and profits. In 1978 the company's net income increased by 45%. In the same year, sales were up by 23%. Similarly, for the first 6 months of 1979, profits rose by 42% and sales by 21%. In constant dollars, the company's earnings per share rose from \$1.68 in 1974 to \$5.62 in 1978 while in the same period profits rose from \$754,000 to \$2,528,000. The company is, therefore, a growing concern and it attributes this growth to "an expansion of the company's product base plus increased productive efficiency".<sup>10</sup> The company has only one other major competitor, the Canadian Bank Note Company, also based in Ottawa.



Local 31 of the Steel Plate Examiners is made up of 24 women whose average seniority at the company was 17 years at the time of the strike.<sup>11</sup> The turnover of workers, therefore, is low and this is an acknowledged asset to the company.<sup>12</sup> The local is part of the International Plate Printers, Die Strippers and Engravers Union whose head office is in the U.S. The union has no full time personnel in Ottawa and the locals have traditionally maintained a great deal of autonomy from the International and its other locals in bargaining.<sup>13</sup> The Steel Plate Examiners have also historically negotiated separately from the Printers Local and the five other unions in the plant. They have, however, negotiated jointly with the Steel Plate Examiners at the Canadian Bank Note Company. These women are also members of Local 31.<sup>14</sup>

Working in pairs or threes, the Examiner's job consists of examining and stacking the printed material as it comes off the presses. The Examiner removes defective work and at the same time, from about six possible problem areas connected with the specialized process, attempts to diagnose what might be causing the defect. If it is considered serious enough, the Examiner is responsible for signalling problems to the printer or for stopping the press in order to rectify the problem. The Steel Plate Examiners have first responsibility for determining whether the product is acceptable. Failure to correct an error may result in excessive spoilage or damage to the machine. Another group of workers, the Graphic Artists, carry out a later, more detailed examination of the printed material but they have nothing to do with the printing process itself. This group of workers is also made up of women and their rate of pay was the same as that of the Examiners. These workers are members of the Graphic Artists International, Local 588.

Besides checking the printed material, the Examiner is sometimes called upon to place tissue sheets between printed sheets. The presses deliver between 25 and 60 sheets per minute depending on the type of material printed and the press which is in use. The work was described by the Arbitrator as "of a fatiguing nature". The basic training for the Examiner is on the job training working with an experienced Examiner. After three months the employee may work alone on the simpler processes or on a less demanding job and will then be moved gradually to more difficult work. An Examiner is expected to be proficient after one year although the full rate of pay is not reached until after two years on the job.

The company employs about 250 hourly paid workers at its Ottawa plant and with the exception of one unrepresented group they are represented by 6 unions and covered by 11 separate collective agreements.<sup>15</sup> The unions and the company, therefore, are engaged in a multiple collective bargaining situation with both skilled and unskilled workers. Although this kind of craft bargaining situation can result in fairly established relationships between the rates of pay of the crafts, their helpers, apprentices and journeymen, pay differentials between the Steel Plate Examiners and other semi-skilled and unskilled workers in the plant had widened in recent years. Although the arbitration decision placed the main portion of the blame for this with the Examiner's union and their ineffectiveness in bargaining, the women themselves argued that the differentials were the result of discriminatory hiring and training practices of the company. The company, they argued, hired women only for training into the position of Steel Plate Examiner. In addition, until the post arbitration period, women had not been given the opportunity to apply for positions in the plant then held by men, such as printer's helper or porter.

There also seems to have been an attempt on the part of the company to control the labour market in the area. The job is fairly specialized and few similar jobs exist in the Ottawa area but the women alleged that there was an unofficial agreement with The Canadian Bank Note Company not to hire each other's employees.<sup>16</sup> Because of the lack of mobility both inside and outside the firm, one possible explanation for the maintenance of wage discrimination inside the company was that it was able to take advantage of this situation to impose starting wages and wage settlements below those obtained in dollar terms by male workers.<sup>17</sup>

b) Collective bargaining

The one year collective agreement between the company and the union was due to expire in April 1977. In February 1977, under the terms of the agreement, the local notified the company of its intention to negotiate a new collective agreement in which "equal wages with the men on the floor" would be the central issue. At the same time, the local requested that joint negotiations be held with the Canadian Bank Note Company.<sup>18</sup>

The male workers with whom the women of Local 31 were comparing themselves in their negotiations belonged to the lowest paid group of the Ottawa Printing Specialties and Paper Products Union. These workers were designated as "Porters, Paper Handlers and Cleaners" by the Company and referred to as "porters" and "floor boys" by the women. The higher categories within this union were classed into three grades designated by the company as Building Maintenance Workers. As of April 1977, the pay range for the lowest classified workers in this union was between \$5.11 and \$6.26 and for the highest it was between \$6.48 and \$6.89.<sup>19</sup>

A second group of male workers with whom the women subsequently compared themselves during the arbitration process were the Printer's

workers, also members of the Printers International Union. These workers received two years on the job training and the rate of pay ranged from \$6.17 to \$9.59 an hour after two years.<sup>20</sup>

The collective agreements of the other bargaining groups in the company were also due to expire at the beginning of May. The company agreed to commence bargaining with Local 31 as all the other negotiations would hang on the outcome. The company's initial offer to all bargaining units was 8%. Local 31 rejected this. By the middle of May negotiations seemed to be going nowhere and the President of Local 31, Shirley Cooligan, wrote to the Employment Standards Branch of the Ontario Ministry of Labour asking them to investigate the matter as a case of wage discrimination on the basis of sex. The reply from the Ministry indicated that because the women were not doing substantially similar work as the men, the matter did not fall under the Ontario Labour Standards Act. The Ministry advised the local to pursue their goals through collective bargaining.<sup>21</sup>

A conciliator was called in during the summer but neither the company nor the union was willing to move from their positions. As the possibility of a strike seemed to be no longer just a threat, in September the company increased its offer to 10% to all bargaining units, with an additional 2.8% to the Examiners and the Graphic Artists from January. The Graphic Artists accepted this two-stage offer and the other all male bargaining units in the plant followed suit. The Examiners at both companies again refused the offer because it did nothing to meet their demands for parity with the lowest paid male workers.

A week before the strike was due to be called in mid-October, the company threatened to withdraw the usual retroactive pay clause if the local went out on strike. When it became obvious that they would

either have to accept the company's latest offer or go out on strike and risk losing their back pay, the Examiners from the Canadian Bank Note Company voted to accept their employer's latest offer which was the same as that of the British American Bank Note Company.

The acceptance of the two-stage pay increase by the Graphic Artists and later by the Examiners from the Canadian Bank Note Company not only isolated the Examiners at the British American Bank Note Company in their strike action and rendered it much less effective than it might otherwise have been, but it also jeopardized their case in the arbitration hearing. The British American Bank Note Company made the case that the Examiners had requested joint bargaining with the Canadian Bank Note Company. Because the workers there had accepted their employer's latest offer, it was questionable, argued the company, whether the higher claims of the British American employees were legitimate. But the fact was that negotiations were never actually carried on jointly. The two companies seem to have made the same offer to both sets of workers and the local, as far as possible until the strike was called, maintained a unified bargaining position.

In early October 1977, the Examiners at the British American Bank Note Company were in a legal position to strike and they voted to do so on October 14, with the explicit demand that this was a strike for equal pay for work of equal value.<sup>22</sup>

c) The strike

The strike lasted for nine weeks and the picket line was 'manned' every day and night during that period. The women received only \$25.00 a week in strike pay and this was due to run out after the tenth week. Although the plant was never at any time completely shut down during the strike, production slowed down considerably after a few weeks. This was largely because the Printers refused to cooperate with the

company in putting two men on each press, one of whom, it was intended, should perform the examiner's tasks. Although some picketing was successful in keeping out suppliers and maintenance people, in order not to alienate their fellow workers, Local 31 agreed that other workers in the plant could cross the picket line.

The picket was not successful, however, in its main purpose of blocking the shipping out of material for delivery to the Bank of Canada. Nor was it successful in preventing some material from being sent to the company's plant in Montreal. Nevertheless, because the printers refused to cooperate with the company in working with blackleg labour, production at the Ottawa plant slowed down enough so that by the beginning of December, the printers and several other employees were laid off.<sup>23</sup>

The company did not approach the union for further negotiations until the women had been on strike for two weeks, at which time they merely repeated their previous offer.<sup>24</sup> The mediator was called in on the fifth week of the strike. At this point the union understood that arbitration was not a possible alternative in this case, even though they believed that the company favoured this solution. The confusion over this was cleared up and the union and the company met with the mediator early in December to discuss the issue. The mediator later met with the union privately and indicated that they would have to spell out the terms of the arbitration very carefully if they wanted to have the case considered on the basis of equal pay. The terms were then the subject of further negotiation with the company over a period of about one week before the strike was finally called off.<sup>25</sup>

The company had attempted to counteract the effects of the strike in two specific ways. Firstly, there was an attempt to maintain production inside the plant by persuading the printers and the graphic artists

to take on the Examiners' work. When this failed because of the lack of cooperation from the printer's union, the company shipped material to its Montreal plant for processing and checking.<sup>26</sup> The company's strategy to obtain cooperation from other workers to help break the strike took the form of persuasion and threat. In the first instance, the company contrived to set those employees still working in the plant against the striking workers. Meetings were called and letters sent to employees who were laid off 'explaining' the situation. Although the all female Graphic Artists' union seems to have been willing to comply with the company's request, the Printers' union refused to cooperate by working two men to a press. It was then suggested by the company to the printers that if the strike was allowed to continue technological changes might have to be introduced, putting some of the printers' jobs in jeopardy.<sup>27</sup>

What finally persuaded the women to go back to work was their own economic hardship combined with what they knew to be the economic hardship of the other employees from the plant who had been laid off.<sup>28</sup> The Printers, for instance, were in a particularly bad situation because not only were they not receiving strike pay, but the UIC had ruled that because they were members of the same International as the striking employees, they were ineligible for UIC payments.<sup>29</sup> Christmas was approaching and the strike pay was running out. The Local voted to return to work and on December 15, the union met with the company to discuss submitting the case to arbitration.<sup>30</sup>

## 2. Arbitration

Instead of the 29.2% originally demanded during bargaining, the local changed its demand in the arbitration brief to equal pay for work of equal value based on job evaluations drawn up by an expert from CUPE. On this reckoning, the Steel Plate Examiner's job fell between that of



Printer's Helper and the Floor boy/Porter and would need a 77% pay increase to give the women parity.<sup>31</sup>

The terms of reference of the arbitration case agreed between the union and the company, however, were somewhat ambiguous as to the question of equal pay for work of equal value.<sup>32</sup> In the written agreement to send the matter to arbitration dated December 17, the dispute was described as one which had "arisen out of a difference of opinion between the parties on the merits of skill and responsibility of a job with the company regardless of sex." Following this preamble, the specific point for arbitration was specified as "The rate of wage to be paid to the Examiners during the term of the contract."<sup>33</sup>

The union's brief in the arbitration case used the opening paragraph of the agreement as the definition of what the dispute was about. With the use of evaluations, therefore, the union was able to compare the jobs and the rate of pay for the Examiners with that of other (male) jobs and rates of pay for the men in the plant who were closely connected with the printing process. The company, on the other hand, chose to base its case solely on the question of the rate of pay. In doing so they compared the Examiners to the Graphic Artists who performed an examination function inside the plant and to workers doing similar work outside the company in the federal government or the printing industry.

The arbitrator, Owen Shime, took the middle ground between these two positions. In doing so, he circumvented the issue of equal pay for work of equal value because he addressed the question of sex discrimination separately from that of comparability. This undermined the union's argument that the two were inevitably linked because of the 'job ghetto' situation inside the plant which had been created by the hiring and training practices of the company. Secondly, because Shime argued that



the method of job evaluation had historically not been used in collective bargaining in the printing industry, he ignored the union's calculation of where the examined job stood in relation to others at the plant. Shime dealt with the comparability issue explicitly from the point of view of the traditional collective bargaining practices in the printing industry. Thirdly, Shime argued that the arbitration process was not a 'judgement' but an 'adjudication' based on what existed in similar jobs and situations elsewhere, and/or, if applicable, on a set of historical relationships which have been established over time. Shime, therefore, ruled out the possibility that the arbitration could be a precedent setting case which would in any way alter established practices.<sup>34</sup>

More specifically, Shime refused to accept the union's case of comparability on the basis of job evaluation for three reasons: 1) the history of bargaining in the printing industry had been 'splintered' and "the relationships among workers were not capable of being analyzed on a purely rational or objective basis." 2) The job evaluations provided by the union had been 'too selective' because they had not included the Graphic Artists at British American who were paid similar wages as the examiners. Because the issue of pay was separated from the issue of discrimination, he did not take up the question of job ghettoization. 3) The job evaluation had not been the result of a consultative process with the company but had been unilaterally formulated by the union.<sup>35</sup>

While Shime did not argue against the union's case that the company, because of its profitable record, had the ability to pay the wage demanded, he agreed with the Company that its competitive position had to be taken into account and that the settlement of a 77% wage demand could jeopardise this. Although the company did not fall within the terms of reference of the AIB, it also made the case in its brief that because

wage and price controls were in effect in Canada at that time, a wage settlement above the norm set by the Anti-Inflation Board regulations would be inflationary and irresponsible.<sup>36</sup>

Addressing the question of discrimination, Shime agreed with the Ontario Ministry of Labour that the work was 'not similar' to that of the male workers. He argued in fact that the work of the floor boys was 'dirtier' than that of the Examiners and this could account for the difference in wages. In this context, the usual criteria of skill and responsibility were ignored. In his concluding remarks, Shime argued that while there was inconsistency in the wage rates of the floor boys and the examiners, this was not necessarily evidence of discrimination on the part of the company. Instead, he made two kinds of argument which, while it attributed the difference in pay to the collective bargaining process, also placed the solution in that arena.

Firstly, the work force in the industry is splintered into multiple bargaining units which of itself produces inconsistency in wage bargaining. Since this occurs elsewhere under similar conditions, he argued, inconsistency was not unusual and was not evidence of discrimination. Secondly, the wage rate of the 'floor boys' could be accounted for by more effective collective bargaining on the part of their union. The solution to the widening differentials and the different rates of pay between the two sets of workers, therefore, lay in the collective bargaining process.<sup>37</sup> On this question Shime took a similar position to that of the Ontario Ministry of Labour. The onus was quite clearly put upon the Steel Plate Examiners' local and the Printer's union to bargain more effectively on behalf of the women.

Furthermore, Shime accepted the company's argument that in comparison with the Graphic Artists at the company and other examiners at the Bank

of Canada and the federal government, as well as in other printing establishments elsewhere, the wage offered to the Steel Plate Examiners was 'a fair one'. Again the question of job ghettos--whether the examiners at the other plants were also women or predominantly women--was not addressed, nor could it be under the terms of reference which the arbitrator had set for himself.

Shime also accepted the company's argument that because the offer of 12.8% had been accepted by the Steel Plate Examiners at the Canadian Bank Note Company as a result of the "normal, bilateral bargaining and decision-making process", the charge of discrimination on the basis of sex could not be upheld. The union's argument, that the women at the Canadian Bank Note Company had made their own decision to accept the offer of 12.8% after an assessment of the possibilities of winning a strike, was discounted.

On the one hand, Shime argued that it was up to the union to rectify the problem of widening wage differentials and ensure that it was not a party to an agreement which contravened the Labour Relations Act forbidding discriminatory bargaining practices. On the other hand, he argued that "the process of making the decision about wage rates was bilateral, and it is reasonable to infer that it was arrived at in the normal collective bargaining process after a relative assessment of bargaining strength, including the willingness of the members to withdraw their services."<sup>38</sup> On the basis of these arguments the arbitrator's decision was in favour of the company's original offer to the union of 12.8%.

### 3. The Political and Legal Processes

#### a) Political pressure

After being notified by the Ontario Ministry of Labour that the Ontario legislation would not cover their case, the executive of Local 31 went beyond the collective bargaining process in an attempt to bring polit-

ical pressure to bear on the company both during and after the negotiations.

Contact was made with the CLC and the OFL, both of whom made unsuccessful attempts to change the situation. Shirley Carr, Vice President of the CLC, appealed to the then Minister of Labour Bette Stephenson to put a wider interpretation on the implementation of the Ontario Human Rights Act. The OFL Convention which was held during the strike voted to make representation to the government to amend the Ontario legislation.<sup>39</sup>

Because of the federal government's connection with the company, appeals were made by the CLC to the Federal Minister of Labour, John Munro, to put pressure to bear on the company to change its bargaining position. Ottawa NDP MLA's Evelyn Gigantes and NDP provincial leader Michael Cassidy both raised questions in the Ontario legislature on the issue of the need to change the present legislation.<sup>40</sup> The matter was later taken up by the NDP through a private member's Bill. This was defeated in Committee in early 1980.<sup>41</sup>

Most of the political pressure and lobbying activity was reported in the media at the time of the strike and while it made the case something of a 'cause celebre' it served little to change the situation for the Steel Plate Examiners. Since the company was not directly involved in selling to the public, adverse publicity of this kind could have little impact. Although the publicity served to drum up some financial support for the strikers from women's groups across the province, most of this arrived after the strike had ended.<sup>42</sup>

Initially, the executive of the local had been reluctant to take the issue outside the union movement and it was particularly reluctant to take what it considered to be an extreme militant position, for example,

by expanding their picket line to include women's groups or to allow the issue to become the focus of mass demonstrations or meetings.<sup>43</sup>

Although the women had been aware in the early stages of the strike that political pressure might be needed to change the company's bargaining position, this was seen in terms of the legitimate channels of the democratic political process--letters to MP's, lobbying by recognized pressure groups (the CLC, OFL) and raising the matter with the political parties in opposition at Queen's Park.<sup>44</sup>

While it was unsuccessful in terms of the Examiners' specific case, the political pressure did have some repercussions, however. In early 1980, the Ontario Minister of Labour upgraded the Employment Standards Branch inspectorate by hiring 11 more inspectors in an effort to remove the onus of complaint from the individual employee. As a result, within the first few weeks of the new program, several new cases of wage discrimination were uncovered in the province, even though the Branch is still operating under the original terms of reference of 'equal pay for similar work'.<sup>45</sup> Premier Davis, under pressure from women in his own party on the issue, in the spring of 1980 promised a new Conservative Bill which would address the issue of equal pay for work of equal value. In making this announcement, however, he cautioned that implementation of this kind of legislation could be difficult.<sup>46</sup> Given the government's previous record with its existing legislation, the warning is probably appropriate.

#### b) The Human Rights Commission

The strike ended in December 1977. In January 1978, the Federal government's Human Rights Commission came into operation. During the course of the strike, questions had been raised in parliament about the federal government's responsibility in the case because Section 11

of the Canadian Human Rights Act bases sex discrimination in wages on equal pay for work of equal value. Gordon Fairweather, the Chairman of the Commission, had issued a statement indicating that if the strike was not settled when the Commission came into operation in January 1978, the Commission would examine the case. Although he indicated at that time that the company's affairs fell under provincial jurisdiction, because the company did a large amount of its business with the federal government through the Bank of Canada, it could be argued that it was a government contractor.<sup>47</sup> In this case, the Human Rights Act had provisions in Section 19 for the governor in council "to make recommendations respecting the terms and conditions to be included in or applicable to any contract, licence or grant."

Questioned on the possibility of using this provision in the Commons, Prime Minister Trudeau replied that this would be "a completely incorrect procedure." "As a matter of principle we do not encourage third parties to involve themselves in disputes by exercising any kind of economic boycott."<sup>48</sup> It seemed unlikely, therefore, that Fairweather's willingness to take up the issue on the basis of the government's contractual position and its responsibility under the Act would not receive the necessary Cabinet backing.

Nevertheless, when the arbitration failed to meet the union's demands, instead of proceeding with a judicial review of the case, which was initially planned, the union decided to leave the matter in the hands of the federal Human Rights Commission.

The hearing took place in December 1979 and judgement in the case was handed down in March 1980. The tribunal argued, firstly, that the nature of the Act was Human Rights, clearly differentiating it from the

narrower aspects of labour legislation. Secondly, they argued that the unintended scope of the Canadian Human Rights Act had been fairly narrowly defined by parliamentary discussion when it was enacted. During parliamentary debate on the issue it was clear that the Act was not intended to have wide ranging constitutional jurisdiction under civil law. Even here, the residual powers of the "peace, order and good government" clause of the British North America Act had not been invoked which might have ensured that the Act had universal applicability in Canada. The Human Rights Act specifically states that the legislation is to "extend the present laws in Canada to give effect, within a purview of matters coming within the legislative authority of the Parliament of Canada." This was interpreted by the Tribunal to mean that the Act only applies to enterprises falling under federal jurisdiction and that it should not be seen as "an attempt to supplant existing provincial legislation in the field, but rather to supplement it by filling in some of the gaps left by it."<sup>49</sup>

Given this rather narrow interpretation of the scope of the Act, the Tribunal had to decide, it was argued, whether the business of the British American Bank Note Company fell under provincial or federal jurisdiction in the matter of human rights.

Basing their discussion on two precedent cases, it was argued that while the control of paper money, which was the major part of the company's business, was clearly a matter of federal competence, it could not be argued on this basis that the employment practices of the company also fell under federal jurisdiction in respect to human rights.<sup>50</sup> The employment practices of the company were already covered by the Ontario Human Rights Act and by Ontario labour legislation and there could only

be a basis for supplementing this legislation if the practices of the company's operation in other than actual bank note production amounted to discrimination in their provision of services to the general public. Since the company's employment practices did not come into the specific category of the actual issuing of paper money (such as banking) which would have placed it in the category of the federal government's incidental control, it was decided that the matter of wage discrimination in this case did not come within the powers of the Tribunal.<sup>51</sup>

In making its decision, the Tribunal reasoned the case on the basis of precedents which, although they were about employment, were not argued in terms of human rights but in terms of the constitutionality of the question. The question of human rights, therefore, was clearly viewed as subordinate to the question of constitutional jurisdiction. While it could be argued that the Tribunal was unnecessarily narrow in its interpretation of the scope of the Act, it was constrained by political realities. The Tribunal itself acknowledged the Act's weak position both legally and constitutionally by suggesting several ways in which, given the will to do so, parliament could have expanded the Act's efficacy and jurisdiction.<sup>52</sup>

It has already been noted that, in theory, under the terms of the Act, the federal government had the power to act, but that it did not do so. This reluctance is comprehensible in both political and economic terms. Apart from the sensitive political considerations surrounding the question of federal or provincial jurisdiction in this area, the federal government would have been setting a precedent with fairly broad ramifications for the labour relations system in the private sector if it had extended the concept of equal pay for work of equal



value to include companies with any kind of contractual relations with the federal government. The political repercussions would have been even greater, however, if the Human Rights Tribunal had not been careful to differentiate the human rights aspects of the Act's power from that of labour legislation.

The Human Rights Commission is now in the process of appealing the Tribunal's decision in the Supreme Court of Appeal. Given, however, the fairly weak position of the Act constitutionally and legally, and the politically ascendant position of provincial jurisdictions in recent years, it is unlikely that a decision coming down in favour of the Commission's case will remain unchallenged by the Province of Ontario or the company.

#### Conclusions

The above case study has documented one instance in which equal pay for work of equal value became the explicit demand of a union in the process of a collective bargaining situation. But the strike was to all intents and purposes defeated. Although the organizational structure of the unions in the plant was in part to blame for both the discrepancy in pay and for the failure of the strike, it is also clear that the defeat was only possible because the issue was either obscured or deflected by the processes and ideological discourse within which the issue was fought out. This 'mystification' of the real issue of the value of women's work, however, raises contradictions, which upon examination, become very apparent.

While the union was defeated on the issue in this specific instance, the kind of demands they were making will not go down into historical oblivion. For many women inside and outside the labour movement, it has served as yet another example of the limitations of the

present legislation in Ontario. But more than this, a close examination of the structure and ideology of collective bargaining reveals the full weight of the kind of barriers which must be overcome if women are to achieve equal pay in practice.

Concretely, the reasons for the failure of the Examiners to achieve their goals within the collective bargaining and industrial relations system are obviously complex. As far as the local itself was concerned, these related to both organizational and ideological factors.

It seems that the women had only relatively recently begun to feel justified in demanding equal pay. Indeed, the initial demands were not for equal pay for work of equal value but only for parity with the lowest paid men in the plant. Even here, there was some reluctance on the part of the other all-female local at the plant to support Local 31 in this demand. Although all the women in Local 31 supported the strike in principle, it seems to have been a relatively small group within the local who felt strongly enough about the issue to take on the tasks of organization. There seems to have been a profound sense among this group of women that the situation at the plant was intolerable. Having voiced their grievances to fellow workers on a number of occasions, they were taunted by some of the male workers for seeming to be unable to do anything about their situation.<sup>53</sup>

Their demand only became one for 'equal pay for work of equal value' after the strike had commenced and their attempts to close the gap in pay using existing means were fruitless. In the arbitration case, the union took up the principle of equal pay for work of equal value because it was the only logical way to present their case, which rested on comparability with the male workers. This demand was one which evolved as confrontation proceeded and the issue became more clear. This unplanned approach to

a politically sensitive and yet powerful issue had both advantages and disadvantages. It meant on the one hand that the strike had not been designed specifically to challenge the legislation. This 'political innocence' and the fact that the women were prepared to work within the existing legislation and structures served to highlight the inadequacy of the Ontario legislation in a way which a more politically motivated strike might not have done. Partly because of the local's autonomy in decision making, the nature of their demands developed spontaneously. While there were drawbacks in the lack of strategy, it also meant that there were few constraints on tailoring their strategy in the interests of the long-term. Thus, by the time the strike was over, the issue and its real nature had been brought into clear focus, not only for the women themselves but for a broader public who were following the case, by the apparent audacity of their claim.

On the other hand, the lack of planning and of a clear strategy also meant that there were loopholes in making a consistent case before the arbitrator which gave the company the opportunity to argue that the local's demands were inconsistent and unreasonable. The high degree of autonomy enjoyed by the local may also, in the long run, have worked against them. Owen Shime was perhaps correct in claiming that the union itself was in part to blame for the situation in which the women initially found themselves. The International seems to have done little or nothing to remedy what had been a fairly longstanding practice of hiring and wage discrimination by the employer. Although the strike was legally recognized by the International and the women received a small amount of strike pay for the duration of the strike, they were left to themselves to organize and drum up support for the strike both inside

and outside the plant.

Local 31, like several of the other locals at the plant, is part of an old international craft union. These unions have traditionally taken little interest in 'politicizing' their members or putting their weight behind issues which take on an overt political content. The fact that the strike took place in a craft union shop placed not only organizational, but ideological, constraints on the politicization of the issue inside and outside the plant. Solidarity amongst the women in the plant was not uniformly maintained and the multi-union situation did not help to create it, but tended rather to foster competition between the two all-female locals.

When the collective bargaining process failed, the issue was brought into the political arena. As discussed earlier, the women in the local initially had a great deal of confidence in the democratic political process and they were not reticent about trying to make their complaints heard. But they tended to see politics only in institutional terms. Protest was directed through established pressure groups or members of parliament. Such overt political action as there was was planned in accordance with this view. There was little appreciation on the part of the local that lobbying the NDP or Liberal opposition parties at Queen's Park or writing to the local MLA was unlikely to effect an immediate change in the Ontario law or its implementation on their behalf.

The other side of the coin to the obstacles created by the union organizational structure and the lack of strategy was the collective bargaining and arbitration process itself. As is clear from Shime's report, this took place within a set of ideological assumptions about what constitutes a 'just' or 'fair' wage. Within the discourse of collective bargaining and the industrial relations system, a wage which

has been bargained for is, by definition, a fair one. According to the Labour Practices Act, only where a union knowingly accepts a discriminatory wage rate is such a wage considered discriminatory.

Although it was recognized that the bargaining strength of a particular union can in reality vary and that this would have implications for the outcome, this was not considered to be an argument which justified intervention to rectify unequal or discriminatory wage practices on the part of the arbitrator. The onus, therefore, to achieve a 'fair wage' was placed entirely with the union. In other words, the structure of collective bargaining itself, for the purposes of reaching an arbitration decision, was considered to be a situation in which the union and the employer meet as equals. Within the discourse of the industrial relations system, therefore, collective bargaining is extracted from the unequal relationship which exists structurally between capital and labour and is assumed to take place between equals.

The findings of this case study have immediate practical implications for the women's movement. But the case study also raises interesting questions for further study by sociologists. Has the present Ontario legislation, for instance, contributed to the problem of job ghettoization because one means of getting around the legislation is through discriminatory hiring and training practices? To what extent does the structure and practice of trade unions help to maintain job ghettos? To what extent is it possible that the demand for equal pay for work of equal value could present a challenge to the pattern of rewards which now exist in society, and what are the implications of this? These are just some of the questions which might be pursued by those interested in further research in this area.

But there are also practical lessons to be drawn from this case study. Firstly, women in the union movement must learn to work and fight together for equal pay. Traditional, particularistic, union or trade interests and loyalties must be re-examined in the light of the equal pay principle. This may mean struggles will emerge within unions and between unions as much as they do with employers. Secondly, women cannot afford to rely solely on the legislative process to change their situation. Legislation must be interpreted and put to the test before its effectiveness can be judged. More progressive legislation can only back-up militant and united union struggle for the abolition of wage discrimination in practice at the work place.

#### FOOTNOTES

- 1 Besides the Federal Human Rights legislation, B.C. and Quebec do not limit equal pay rights to the same work. But there are constraints in both provinces on the universal application of equal pay for work of equal value. See Lynn McDonald, "Equal Pay--How Far Off?" Canadian Dimension, vol. 14, no.6, 1980.
- 2 See Julie White, Women in Unions, Ottawa: Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 1980, for statistical information on women in unions in Canada.
- 3 Affidavit of Shirley Cooligan, President of Local 31, Steel Plate Examiners Union, August 2, 1978.
- 4 Union brief to Arbitration Hearing. February 7, 1978.
- 5 Arbitration Decision of Mr. Owen Shime, April 13, 1978.
- 6 Interview with Lynn Kaye, Counsel for the union, April 1980.
- 7 The Decision of the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal, February 26, 1980, p.19.
- 8 Interview with Shirley Cooligan, former President of Local 31, Steel Plate Examiners Union, April 1980.
- 9 The details of the company's operations were taken from Owen Shime's Arbitration Decision, op.cit.
- 10 The details of the company's financial position were taken from The Financial Post Corporations Service, revised edition, December, 1979.
- 11 Union brief to Arbitration Hearing, February 7, 1978.
- 12 Interview with Personnel Officer at British American Bank Note Co., April 1980.
- 13 Other than strike pay, the International did very little to help the local win its strike or the arbitration. In the latter case the local received considerable help from CUPE.
- 14 Arbitration Decision, op.cit.
- 15 This description of the work and the workplace is based on the union brief, the company's brief and the Arbitration Decision, op.cit.

- 16 Interview with Shirley Cooligan and Maureen McKenney, January 1978.
- 17 This does not account for the genesis of wage discrimination. In an interview with the Ottawa Journal in December 1977, R.P. White, Vice Chairman of the company is quoted as saying that "it was traditional in the industry for men and women to be segregated in different unions and job categories." He also observed that a lot of women were second wage earners but contended that this was not a reason why they received lower wages."
- 18 Letter dated February 25, 1977, from Maureen McKenney, Secretary of the local to Industrial Relations Manager at British American Bank Note Company.
- 19 Union brief to Arbitration Hearing, op.cit.
- 20 Ibid
- 21 Letter from Employment Standards Branch of the Ontario Ministry of Labour, May 26 1977.
- 22 This account of the negotiations was taken from the arbitration documents and from interviews with Shirley Cooligan, union president and Lynn Kaye, the local's counsel.
- 23 This account is based on interviews with Shirley Cooligan and Maureen McKenney in November 1977 and January 1978.
- 24 Affidavit of Shirley Cooligan, August 2, 1978.
- 25 There was some confusion on the part of the union as to whether the case could legally be put to arbitration. According to Cooligan the union was told during the mediation proceedings in November that the case was not eligible for arbitration. When it was finally realized that it was, negotiations began with the company through the mediator as to the terms of reference for arbitration.
- 26 The company changed its trucking contractor during the strike because Brinks drivers refused to cross the picket lines. The company then hired Ryders Trucking Co. whose drivers crossed the picket line.
- 27 Interviews with Shirley Cooligan and Maureen McKenney with Mr. Kujack of the Printers Union, November 1977.
- 28 Many of the women in local 31 were heads of single parent families or the main bread winners in their family.



- 29 Citizen, December, 1977
- 30 Union reply to company brief to Arbitration Hearing
- 31 Union brief to Arbitration Hearing, op.cit
- 32 The union made the case in its rebuttal to the company's brief that the terms of reference were clear and that they had been the point of protracted negotiations between the parties for almost a week in mid-December indicating that the intention was clear. Agreement to Arbitrate December 17, 1977.
- 33 Agreement to Arbitrate, December 17, 1977.
- 34 Arbitration Decision, op.cit.
- 35 Ibid
- 36 Company's Brief to Arbitration Hearing, op.cit.
- 37 Arbitration Decision, op.cit.
- 38 Ibid
- 39 Press reports, November-December, 1977.
- 40 Press reports, December 1977.
- 41 Maclean's Magazine, April 1980.
- 42 Interview with Shirley Cooligan and Maureen McKenney, January 1978.
- 43 Discussion with Shirley Cooligan in late October, 1977.
- 44 Ibid
- 45 Citizen, April 1980.
- 46 Davis stated that he favoured a program of affirmative action. This largely skirts the problem of wage discrimination in job ghettos by concentrating on upgrading the skills of a limited number of women. The solution is thus individualized. Citizen, April 15, 1980.
- 47 Citizen, December 1977
- 48 Ibid
- 49 The Canadian Human Rights Act, Tribunal Decision, February 26, 1980.

- 50 The cases used as precedents were Construction Montcalm vs. Minimum Wage Commission and one which was referred to as the Stevedoring Case. Counsel for the respondent made his case on the former while the Commission's Counsel made his case on the latter. Both cases concerned the question of federal or provincial jurisdiction over labour relations for firms whose operations included some connection with areas of federal jurisdiction, e.g., aeronautics and shipping.
- 51 The Tribunal's decision was based on the Montcalm case in which Justice Baetz had argued that although the company was engaged in operations (the construction of an airport) which clearly came under federal jurisdiction, its employee relations were fundamentally an integral part of these operations and therefore this came under provincial jurisdiction.
- 52 Tribunal decision, op.cit.
- 53 Based on interviews with Shirley Cooligan and Maureen McKenney October 1977, November 1977 and January 1978.

# **Knowledge and Power: Determinations of Educational Curriculum**

Robert White

Several recent contributions to the sociology of education have attempted to present and assess the various theoretical perspectives utilized to examine schooling (Karabel and Halsey, 1977; Hurn, 1978; Murphy, 1979). This work has been valuable in developing an understanding of the current sociological debates concerning education. What is lacking in these discussions, however, is a systematic appraisal of the basic assumptions of the various sociological approaches to the study of curriculum. For example, in his assessment of theoretical explanations in the sociology of education, Murphy (1979) sees the relationship between social classes (or status groups) and school attainment as being of paramount importance. Curriculum is accorded analytical treatment by Murphy mainly in terms of the way it serves as a selection mechanism in the schooling process. He tends to ignore significant underlying factors which may affect how sociologists within each perspective view curriculum. Studies and reviews which

focus primarily on the problem of stratification run the risk of taking the curriculum for granted, as a 'given'. From this viewpoint the curriculum itself is not problematic, rather the concern is over differential appropriation of classroom knowledge.

Analysis which specifically centers on curriculum, however, does not adequately deal with the relationship between knowledge and power as this is manifested in the curriculum. On the one hand, curriculum is seen to be the outcome of 'negotiations' between teacher and students, thus downplaying external constraints on the interaction process. On the other hand, advocates for greater teacher and student autonomy in the development of curriculum underestimate the powerful forces and linkages which circumscribe the decision-making abilities of those involved in the educational process. Alternatively, the 'overdetermined' approach goes beyond the 'given', 'negotiated', and 'reformist' approaches in its analysis of knowledge and control as it locates the educational system in the complex totality that is society. The differences between these approaches are to be found in certain identifiable notions of each concerning the nature of curriculum.

#### Theoretical Considerations

In the study of education it is useful to recognize the theoretical assumptions, both explicit and implicit, which underlie one's research. Following the lead of Sharp and Green (1975: 4), the theme of this section will be

... not so much to chart the accomplishments of the available research showing just what substantive issues have been researched and illustrating the appropriate variables, but to look at the conceptual frameworks within which these 'findings' are generated.

More specifically, I am interested in delineating certain basic assumptions of various sociological approaches to the study of curriculum. As a general

formulation curriculum is that which defines what counts as valid knowledge (Bernstein, 1971), knowledge referring here to ideas, beliefs and values which are transmitted in the classroom. Recognizing the multitude of theories and theoretical positions on the understanding of curriculum, it should be stressed that I do not intend an exhaustive appraisal of each. I do, however, maintain that these varied perspectives can be categorized in a fashion which reflects the essential vantage point from which each views curriculum. Accordingly, I propose to examine four approaches to the study of curriculum: the 'given', the 'negotiated', the 'reformist', and the 'overdetermined'.

In the 'given' approach to the study of classroom knowledge, curriculum is viewed as a received body of understanding that is transmitted in the school and is accepted a priori as being legitimate and unproblematic. From this perspective classroom knowledge is considered as objective 'fact'. In that knowledge is perceived to be external to the knower, it can be appropriated by the student, and, as such, can become the private possession of each individual. There is little question of the specific interests which may determine the nature of classroom knowledge. Indeed, the problem of curriculum, from this approach, is one of appropriation -- that is, how to make the established curriculum, (i.e., that knowledge which claims legitimacy) more relevant, and therefore teachable, to the student. This particular approach is most evident in the prevailing traditions in the sociology of education: structural functionalism and methodological empiricism (see Sharp and Green, 1975; Karabel and Halsey, 1977). Although these labels are used to designate a vast number of theories and a whole gamut of research orientations, certain common features can be found which identify these types of work as being part of a 'tradition'. For instance,

functionalist theories a) take for granted existing institutional arrangements of education, b) underplay possible structural determinations of educational processes, and c) often ignore the role of man as an active participant in the production of knowledge. By seeing the educational system primarily in terms of its significance in the maintenance of social equilibrium or consensus, they tend to downplay any necessary structural incongruities within the school or society itself.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, empiricist studies, which tend to adopt a positivistic methodology, are characterized by a particular epistemological stance to social reality. In this tradition the recording of 'facts' is paramount, rather than the prior issue of clarifying the conceptual scheme operating behind the collection and recording of these facts. In many cases these studies "are guided by structural functionalism which influences the formulation of the problems to be studied and the areas within which solutions can be sought" (Sharp and Green, 1975:2).

As I have mentioned, the tradition of structural functionalism tends to emphasize the maintenance of an ongoing social equilibrium. Characterized by an over-integrated view of social structure and an over-socialized view of man this perspective postulates the human actor as being passively socialized into consensual institutional frameworks. By emphasizing the role of the school in promoting consensus researchers in this tradition tend to downplay the notion of conflict.<sup>2</sup> In viewing the role of the school in society in an uncritical manner the specific interests which underlie the schooling process are left unexamined. Not only does this perspective underestimate the importance of conflict and ideology, it also leads one to neglect the content of the educational process.<sup>3</sup> In other words, what counts as knowledge and why this particular knowledge is

transmitted in the school are questions which this perspective does not address. The school plays a major role in maintaining social order, but this social order itself is not considered problematic.

The methodological empiricist tradition can be criticized in that while a great deal of statistical information can be gathered there are few theoretical or conceptual breakthroughs for interpreting such data (Sharp and Green, 1975). In many such studies an underlying value consensus is assumed. Although there may be some concern with power such research ignores conflict. For example, Brophy and Good (1974: 3) have compiled a number of studies which "focus attention on the individual student's present status, his pattern of strengths and weaknesses, his methods of approaching problems, and his interests, in order to prescribe an education experience which is likely to succeed for him where others have failed". This type of statistical research may highlight the problem of differential achievement within the schools. Methodological innovations may be introduced to facilitate the collection of data and thus the mapping out of observable phenomena and the relations between them in which concern centres on individual differences (according to demographic, social and psychological criteria). Consideration is not given to the underlying structure of relations which determine the patterns of school inequality. Being policy oriented with respect to 'improving' the classroom situation (i.e., to increasing the opportunity of various students to appropriate what the school has to offer as it may appear to the researcher) there is a tendency for this kind of work to take for granted the dominant institutional arrangements of education. The results of such studies can lead to the implementation of compensation and intervention programmes, but they give us little insight into the interests which are at the root of the inequality and they provide no



alternatives to the existing educational system. In that the emphasis

is on neutrality and the method is numerical, methodological empiricism is well adapted to the interests of administration, for it leaves ends in the hands of policy-makers and concentrates the efforts of the social scientist on the means by which these ends may be attained (Karabel and Halsey, 1977: 17).

In recent years, the 'given' approach to curriculum as exemplified by structural functionalism and the methodological empiricist tradition has been criticized by sociologists who feel that research must focus on the levels of subjective meaning which are created in any social setting. The approach to the study of curriculum used by these people is the 'negotiated' perspective in which curriculum is seen as negotiable, as an artifact. Knowledge is viewed as a process, something which is mutually created in the classroom. Learning is the outcome of negotiation between teachers and students about meanings.

"Sociological phenomenology" is a broad and general term which can be used to describe the study of those researchers who feel that the social structure is a human construction and therefore 'reality' is that which is negotiated in any given social situation. In the sociology of education that research which raises questions about 'streaming', 'selection', and the 'unintended consequences of educational arrangements' is criticized from this perspective for treating as unproblematic 'what it is to be educated'. For Michael Young (1971a) the starting point is 'what counts as educational knowledge' (i.e., the social organization of knowledge in educational institutions). Young's concern in the early part of the 1970s was over the interrelation of the process of knowing and knowledge as a product. In other words, recognizing that existing categories (e.g., learning-play) must be conceived as socially constructed, Young (1971b) was interested in the nature of the negotiation



process which occurred in the context of teacher-student relations. Basil Bernstein (1971) and Nell Keddie (1971) share similar concerns. For instance, Bernstein explores the concept of 'boundary' in order to see both the power and control components of the structuring of educational knowledge. Likewise, Keddie casts as problematic what were held to be knowledge and ability in the school.

The phenomenological approach is lucidly presented by Esland (1971) as well. He criticizes the notion of man presented not as world-producer, but as world-produced, (i.e., the objectivistic view of knowledge -- an image of man which is prevalent in the structural functionalist tradition). As an alternative he states that we must see knowledge in terms of "the entire complex process of intersubjective negotiation of meanings" (1971: 75). While emphasizing man's active construction of experience Esland argues that, in the schools, legitimation of knowledge is located at different levels, e.g., teachers, headmasters, and so on. The central concern for Esland is to examine the ways and means in which teachers apprehend the world and to explain why and how these perspectives change over time.

The sociological phenomenology which characterizes most of the articles in Young's book, Knowledge and Control (1971), has been criticized for a number of reasons.<sup>4</sup> By focusing solely on the levels of subjective meaning this perspective is 'guilty', to a certain extent, of 'subjective idealism'. Michael Young (1976) brings this point home when he critically examines two contrasting conceptions of the curriculum. He situates the conception of 'curriculum as fact' as being in opposition to the conception of 'curriculum as practice', and proceeds to criticize both approaches to the study of curriculum. The 'curriculum as fact' conception, which arises out of the structural

functionalist perspective, sees curriculum as the structure of socially prescribed knowledge which is external to the knower. Not only are students passive in this model but teachers are presented as passively reproducing the knowledge which is produced elsewhere by others. Teaching, then, merely means the transmission of preordained knowledge. By seeing curriculum as having a life of its own, this conception obscures the human relations in which it, as any conception of knowledge, is embedded.

'Curriculum as practice', on the other hand, views curriculum as how men collectively attempt to order their world and in the process produce knowledge. "Knowledge becomes that which is accomplished in the collaborative work of teachers and pupils" (Yound 1976: 188). The problem with this model is that it reduces the social reality of curriculum to the subjective intentions and actions of teachers and pupils.

Similarly, by isolating classroom interaction as the sole focus of attention, the phenomenological approaches divorce the process of educational learning from other significant aspects of the social structure. Sharp and Green (1975: 10) for example, point out that,

Whilst it may be useful from an analytical point of view to differentiate different levels of analysis -- the classroom from the school, the school from the community and so on -- it is important to avoid reifying this analytic distinction and treating the different levels of analysis as theoretically distinct. The social processes which occur within classrooms, whilst they may not merely reproduce mechanically wider societal processes, are certainly not autonomous from them.

By directing attention to the so-called microlevel interactions rather than to the larger social structure there is a tendency in studies of this sort to avoid direct confrontation with the status quo. Insofar as this type of classroom analysis is not related to social structure

it may "ignore the constraints under which human actors operate and so ... exaggerate the fragility of the daily routine of school life" (Karabel and Halsey, 1977: 58). What needs to be done is to integrate interactional analysis, which considers the management of knowledge as its central problem, with a structural analysis, which places greater emphasis on power and interests that may underlie the schooling process.

A key difficulty, then, with sociological phenomenology is that it underplays "the extent to which negotiation of meaning in social situations takes place within a context of material and other givens where certain things are non-negotiable" (Sharp and Green, 1975: 29). The starting point for an analysis of classroom knowledge, in my view, should be the ways in which material circumstances affect activity and consciousness. This is to say that I am interested in how material conditions provide the opportunities made available and the constraints imposed upon what is to be transmitted via the educational system.

To a certain extent the 'reformist' approach to the study of curriculum moves in this direction. This approach is an attempt to juxtapose the notion that there is a given body of knowledge which is considered legitimate at a particular moment in time with the position that definitions, evaluations and distribution of knowledge can change over time. To put it differently, the reformist approach recognizes that in a particular time-space location there will be some knowledge which is transmitted as given, but what gets to count as curriculum, (i.e., the definitions of what is accepted truth) is subject to the changing objective realities in which the curriculum is developed. Central to this perspective is not so much the form and content of the learning process, but examination of the exercise of power in the development of curriculum. In analyzing the practice of curriculum

in the school, this approach, being primarily policy oriented, concentrates on the question of who makes curriculum decisions within the educational institution. For example, Eggleston (1977) uses what I have called the reformist approach to examine the struggle for control over the curriculum. One of his concerns is to identify the parameters of the teachers' and the students' roles in the development of curriculum. Following this, he argues for the necessity of teacher autonomy combined with greater input from pupils, such that the definition of curriculum knowledge will lie with the main protagonists in the educational process. Essentially it appears that Eggleston's main emphasis is on increasing the decision-making role of teachers and students, as this presumably awakens them to a 'shared understanding of the human condition'.

The main problem with this approach to classroom knowledge is that it tends to simplify the complex set of constraints on educational practices and it under-estimates the strong linkages between educational institutions on the one hand and the state and the economy on the other. The production of a "model curriculum appropriate for an active democratic society" is not nearly as 'easy' to achieve as Eggleston (1977: 150) seems to suggest. Ideally, for Eggleston, schooling should result in differentiated curriculum achievements where the diverse backgrounds of the teachers and students can be accommodated by making them active participants in the schooling process. He uses the concept of power primarily in the context of a policy debate over whether decisions about curriculum development should continue to reside in present organizational arrangements (e.g., school boards, etc.) or whether they should be placed in the hands of the teachers and students themselves. The guiding rationale for Eggleston's approach to the study of curriculum arises not so much from concern at a theoretical level over what curriculum is, or the

processes through which it is produced, but what can be done on a practical, everyday level to change the roles of those involved in the definition, evaluation and distribution of knowledge in the educational system. There is little discussion of the ideological nature of schooling practices as these pertain to the class nature of capitalist society.

Eggleston's analysis places great emphasis on power as it affects the roles teachers and students are called upon to play in curriculum development. What is lacking in this approach is adequate consideration of the linkages between schooling practices and the structure of class relations in wider society, and the mechanisms whereby class power and class interests are manifested in the classroom. Hence, although he argues that curriculum ought to enhance the expectations and capacity of students to exercise power, Eggleston (1977: 71) leaves one wondering to what ends such an exercise is directed. This leads to a consideration of the fourth approach to the study of curriculum.

The 'overdetermined' approach<sup>5</sup> also looks at the relationship between knowledge and power, but the primary emphasis is on viewing classroom knowledge in terms of the socio-political context within which it exists. In doing so it looks to the specific determinants of educational practices. The central concern is: 'whose interests does that knowledge which is transmitted in and by the school represent?' What is problematic in this kind of study is the content of the typifications and the context in which they emerge (Sharp and Green, 1975). This approach views curriculum, both the officially and explicitly recognized subject matter, and the unstated norms, values and beliefs that are transmitted, as being 'overdetermined' by class interests. In examining what counts as valid knowledge this perspective maintains that the attitudes, values and beliefs which arise

out of the educational experience to a large extent may not relate to the workings of the 'real' world. The school is seen as acting instrumentally to legitimate and reproduce the fundamental inequalities of capitalist society by shaping the subjective disposition of the participants such that the existing social order is accepted as is. The process of overdetermination refers not only to the class bias in the transmission of classroom knowledge, but also to the limits of, and pressures on, curriculum as imposed by the capitalist class by virtue of its control and ownership of the material means of economic and cultural production.<sup>6</sup>

It can be said that this approach to curriculum is an attempt to tackle one of the main unresolved problems of Bernstein's work --- how it is that "power relationships penetrate the organization, distribution and evaluation of knowledge through the social context" (quoted in Karabel and Halsey, 1977: 71). In the next section this problem is discussed in greater depth and an attempt is made to conceptualize the nature of the determinations of educational practices.

#### Knowledge and Power in the Educational Process

The practico-social function of ideas in their relation to the ruling class is crucial to the existence and degree of hegemony exercised in society. The 'over-determined' approach to the study of curriculum attempts to discover and examine the mechanisms specific to the educational system which reflect the power and interests of the capitalist class and which serve to reproduce class relations.<sup>7</sup> These can be linked to external forces which impinge upon the process of schooling. Class and classroom, in this view, should be examined in terms of two questions. These are

(a) "What counts as valid knowledge in the school?" which leads one to consider the nature of learning,  
and

(b) "What are the specific determinations of classroom knowledge?" i.e., what constitutes the limits of, and pressures on, educational practices?

That interaction which we call learning can be captured analytically to some extent through the use of the terms form and content. Although conceptually distinct, these aspects of learning are at the same time members of an inextricable unity. Thus, one cannot adequately examine and describe a learning situation within a particular time-space location through reference only to the form of this process, excluding the content and vice versa. These concepts designate general categories of analysis, although the usage of the term may vary in examination of a specific area of study (e.g. the school). This point will be clarified later in the discussion. By 'form' I mean the structure or (established) manner of doing or saying something. 'Content' as an aspect of learning includes the subject matter and topics treated in a social situation and the essential meaning of these (i.e., the image or representation of social reality which is conveyed to the people involved).<sup>8</sup> To emphasize an obvious, though certainly not trivial, point, the learning process, that is to say, learning in general, is first and foremost a social activity. As such it is necessarily context bound. Form and content are expressions of how learning in general is manifested in any given situation. The process of learning is one of appropriation and 'knowledge', as the outcome of this process, simply refers to what is received or appropriated. Conversely, teaching is a process of transmission, involving the



conscious and/or unconscious selection of a manner of conveying something to another person. Being a social phenomenon the organization of the learning process will determine the material which is to be imparted and the manner in which this is done.

With regard to this, one can distinguish between education and learning by describing learning as a social-psychic process of human development and education as a social organization of this process (Holly, 1975). Classroom knowledge (i.e., that knowledge which is considered valid) may be seen as the outcome of the educational process. Schooling, as it is institutionalized in our society, structures the process of learning; it specifies the process of socialization that it involves. Dandurand (1977: 67) makes the point that, "Education is presented as a conscious undertaking of imposition of a way of thinking, acting or feeling". To understand classroom knowledge we must look at the form and the content of the process of learning as it is found within a specific institution (i.e., the school). In doing so we need to inquire into the manner in which it affects the way of thinking, acting or feeling on the part of the individuals involved. Again, the specific applications of each term, form and content, become apparent depending on the particular instance in which it is used. For example, study on the illusion of choice<sup>9</sup> focuses our attention on the manner in which something is presented (e.g., as a choice which in fact does not really exist). Similarly, analysis of school textbooks may be significant in that their contents are presented as 'objective' fact, ignoring the subjective bias involved in the writing of the book. In both cases the concern is over the manner in which something is done, although the results will vary depending on the object of study. In discussion of content not only are we referring to that information which is



explicitly recognized in the classroom as valid knowledge, that is, the textbook knowledge, etc., which is taught, but also those ideas apart from the formal curriculum which further affect the student's ways of thinking, feeling and acting.

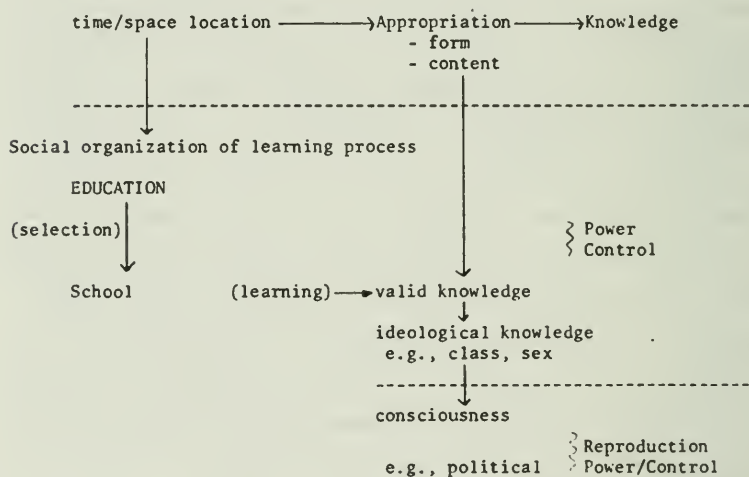
An examination of the process of learning, as formulated in the form/content unity can be useful, but insofar as this process takes place within an institutional setting, it is structured according to the underlying principles of power and control. Hence, the social organization of the learning process, with regard both to what is transmitted and to the manner in which this is done, will have no little effect on what is considered as valid knowledge. The educational system legitimates and places greater value on some forms of knowledge than other forms in the selective character of the transmission process. To put it differently, the school acts so as to pass on certain knowledge, and this knowledge is considered valid because it has been chosen to be taught in the first place. The importance of power and control in the classroom curriculum is that the outcome of the educational process provides specific interest groups with ideological support for their favoured positions. Insofar as that valid knowledge which is appropriated by the student in the school reflects the interests and concerns of a certain class, sex, race, etc., through the structured misrepresentation of social reality, this knowledge can be said to be ideological (see Figure 1).

In this particular approach to the study of schooling our focus has been on the relationship between classroom knowledge and the capitalist social structure. On the one hand, that knowledge which is transmitted by the school is problematic in that it entails specific experiences which are protective of certain class interests. On the other hand, it is necessary to examine the ways in which class bias intrudes upon the learning process within the educational system.

The above concerns can provide us with some insight into the role of the school in the hegemonic process. The school, as a particular institution, is an instance of the hegemony of the ruling class only insofar as it is articulated with the state and the economy. This is to say that the nature of learning and the development of the curriculum serve to reproduce the legitimacy of the existing social order in a manner which reflects to some extent the constraints imposed upon

Figure 1

# LEARNING IN GENERAL



educational practices from forces outside of the educational institution. In making these linkages explicit one is better able to determine the concrete limits of, and pressures on, educational practices which arise out of the power relations of the capitalist mode of production. Two important notions underpin the analysis of specific determinations of classroom knowledge. First, 'knowledge' must be viewed in terms of

practices specific to the educational institution. This point was alluded to earlier when I stated that education is a particular social organization of the learning process. Second, when discussing what counts as valid knowledge, concern is primarily with outlining those experiences within the school which lead to the production of a particular type of consciousness. To restate it, beginning with the premise that ideas are a concrete political force, one should attempt to elucidate the relationship between ideas which are fostered in the school, and the ruling class and the exercise of its hegemony.

As part of the analysis there is an interest in how individuals 'make sense' of the world and their place in it. This requires that in addition to delineating those experiences which count as the valid outcomes of the learning process, we need to examine the relationship between that knowledge which is transmitted in the school and the students for whom this knowledge is intended. The consequences which follow or arise out of the students' relation to that knowledge which is considered valid will have some impact on the development of their conception of social reality. In effect, the selected perceptions regarding the direction and exercise of power in the social order are the result not only of the form and content of educational practices but the product of the structured relationship between the student and the learning process. In other words, not only is analysis of classroom knowledge important but, as well, we must consider the different ways in which this knowledge is appropriated by the student and implications that this has in terms of the hegemonic process.

#### Ideology and Consciousness in the School

In an effort to highlight features of the complex activity which we call educational practices one can consider a) the question of valid

(legitimate) knowledge, and b) the ties between this knowledge (and the treatment of this knowledge), the state and the economy. Writers who do focus on socialization and cultural transmission in the school often distinguish between the "formal" curriculum and the "hidden" curriculum. The formal curriculum generally refers to the transmission of classroom knowledge through explicit instruction. It is overtly recognized and readily apparent to the participants. Course outlines, curriculum guidelines, textbooks, etc., make it clear what is (or is not) to be taught in the classroom and through what procedures it is to be taught. There is a difference, however, between the 'official' curriculum statements and practices in the classroom. This is recognized in the conventional usage of the formal/hidden classification of dimensions of curriculum.

Study of the so-called 'hidden' curriculum concerns itself with the latent norms and values which are transmitted in the schooling process. One of the better formulations of the hidden curriculum is provided by Giroux and Penna (1977: 40). To these writers the concept includes

those unstated norms, values, and beliefs that are transmitted to students through the underlying structure of classroom as opposed to the formally recognized and sanctioned dimensions of classroom experience.

While researchers have long recognized the importance of studying this dimension of curriculum the term "'hidden' curriculum" is somewhat misleading. There are underlying structural relations in the classroom that shape behaviour, but these are not necessarily invisible to the participants. Indeed, as Eggleston (1977: 18) emphasizes, "The hidden curriculum is only hidden, if at all, to the teacher; it is clearly visible to the students -- probably even more clearly visible than the official curriculum".

Although there is considerable interest in the hidden curriculum, research in this area varies. For example, Jackson (1968) examines the features of classroom life primarily in terms of the student-teacher relationship. His main concern is to describe the ways in which the students learn how to respond to the knowledge or normative context in ways that are acceptable to their peers as well as to their teachers. Other writers (Richer, 1980; Parsons, 1959; Dreeben, 1968; Bowles and Gintis, 1976) attempt to address the relationship between what is taught in the hidden curriculum and the wider social context. The school is seen to teach general attitudes and qualities which prepare students for their future adult and work roles. Where these researchers differ is in how they view the role of the school in society. Parsons, for example, argues that what the school teaches is functional for wider society, and that schooling is necessary for effective performance of adult roles in industrial society (Hurn, 1978). Alternatively, Bowles and Gintis see the school as teaching conformity and acquiescence to the demands of an essentially repressive society.

The work of Bowles and Gintis provides some direction for analysis which links what the school does with the system of class relations existing in society. However, in discussing the values and qualities which the schools teach through the hidden curriculum, they tend to overstate their case when they categorize such qualities as "tactful", "perseverant", "consistent", and so on, as repressive.<sup>10</sup> There is a need to discriminate between the inculcation of essentially human values, and the promotion of values and qualities specifically geared to the stability of the status quo (i.e., capitalist consumer society), Entwistle (1978: 56) concisely outlines a general programmatic for this kind of analysis in the following passage:

If people are to be classified by reference to the values to which they subscribe, it is necessary to go beyond these abstract, first-order human values to the second-order norms through which they find concrete expression in the lives of individuals or groups.

This task is extremely difficult, however, if one attempts to organize research simply in terms of the hidden and formal curriculum. Although this distinction is of considerable value in discovering aspects of curriculum which had not previously been revealed, numerous conceptual ambiguities remain. This is particularly apparent with regard to analysis of ideology and consciousness in the school. An initial problem lies in efforts to demarcate the boundaries between the formal and hidden curriculum. Analytically, these categories may be useful in providing direction for study of the curriculum, but discussion of the actual content and form of the learning process can be complex and confusing. For example, textbooks can be cited as examples of the formal curriculum: they are part of the explicit instruction and the content is not hidden. Yet, the presentation of textbook information as objective fact 'hides' the subjective biases which the book may embody. Similarly, study of the hidden curriculum, which, for instance, examines the manner of which a child learns to give an acceptable performance in the classroom, must also consider institutional means of social control in order to explain classroom practices. The hidden curriculum is a particularly problematic concept. Whilst the literature on the hidden curriculum can be utilized in discussions of ideology, to equate the hidden dimensions of schooling with ideology is to impose unsatisfactory limits on analysis. In a broad sense, all interaction and communication in the classroom is ideological. Whether overtly or covertly, educational practices convey particular conceptions and impressions of the world. The examination of textbooks is a case in point. History, for example, is not only presented as an objective record of events and facts but it conveys certain information about the



world. The content of a history textbook is overt, 'open' for all to see. However, it tells "the story of heroes to be emulated and ideals to be striven for, of villains to be condemned and false prophets to be avoided" (Hurn, 1978: 192). Thus formal instruction involves the imparting of specific notions about what is right and wrong, important or unimportant.

We agree with Eggleston (1977: 117) that the hidden curriculum acts as one with the official curriculum as an agent of social control. It identifies the students with 'their place' in the social system, brings them into compliance with its norms and values and with the structure and the sanctions with which they are imposed.

Yet the central problem is not whether certain aspects of curriculum are hidden or overt. The key question is to explain the processes whereby ideological knowledge is transmitted via the curriculum. This can be accomplished by examining a) what is taught, b) how it is taught, and c) the effects on the student of the mechanisms used to ensure that something is learned. The organization of the educational process shapes the behaviour of the participants: what we wish to know is how this affects the development of consciousness in students. Recognizing the intimate ties between formal and hidden dimensions of curriculum it is incumbent upon the researcher to consider both the overt and covert ways in which ideological notions about social reality are manifested in the classroom.

#### Pressures and Limits on Schooling: State and Economy

As part of the 'overdetermined' approach it has been argued that the selective character of classroom knowledge has to be examined with reference to how it affects the students ways of thinking, acting or feeling. Also to be considered is the question: 'how does the ruling class limit and exert pressures on the production of knowledge in the

school?' To answer this requires an examination of the ways in which the state and economy impinge upon educational practices. Thorough analysis of the linkages between the school, state and economy is beyond the scope of this paper, but a sketch of some of the ways outside agencies influence public school curriculum can be provided.

With the bureaucratization of the school in the post-World War II period the state gained centralized administrative and social control. In the case of the public schools, the state at present has considerable legal and financial control. This is primarily in the hands of provincial and local governments. In recent years, however, the proportion of public school funds provided by provincial governments has continued to climb substantially. In addition, the consolidation of local school boards leaves even greater decision-making power in the hands of 'central' authorities.

Provincial governments have a number of legal, financial and informational instruments for school governance. Central authorities exercise their legal control in the area of curriculum development. Not only do they provide curriculum guidelines but they also exercise rights of approval over new courses, textbooks and other material. The Provincial administrations play a key role in deciding the terms of teacher certification. As an essential instrument for control, this strongly influences the content of teacher training. Financially, a Ministry of Education can effect decisions at the local level in a number of ways through formula financing and the provision of various grants. Significantly, "New courses and programmes are not automatically financed even if they are kept within the framework of formula-based funds" (OECD, 1975: 11). Governments also use informational policy instruments which are used to shape local programmes and school



organizations. For example, the OECD External Examiners' Report (1975: 12) points out that,

The central production of curriculum materials reaches substantial levels in many Provinces, which partly explains the large central staff found in some of them... 'Supervisory' functions at central and regional level employ a large number of people, many of whom act as 'expert consultants' with a de facto combination of advisory and controlling functions.

To illustrate the extensive bureaucratic controls on what is to be taught in the public schools, and how this is to be taught, one need only refer to provincial legislation regarding education. For example, in Ontario the Minister of Education has broad powers in the development of curriculum and school programs. The Minister may

8. -- (1)

- (a) name the diplomas and certificates that are to be granted to pupils and prescribe their form and the conditions under which they are to be granted;
- (b) prescribe the courses of study that shall be taught and the courses of study that may be taught in the primary, junior, intermediate and senior divisions;
- (c) in respect of schools under the jurisdiction of a board,
  - (i) issue curriculum guidelines and require that courses of study be developed therefrom and establish procedures for the approval of courses of study that are not developed from such curriculum guidelines,
  - (ii) prescribe areas of study and require that courses of study be grouped thereunder and establish procedures for the approval of alternative areas of study under which courses of study shall be grouped, and
  - (iii) approve or permit boards to approve,
    - (a) courses of study that are not developed from such curriculum guidelines, and
    - (b) alternative areas of study under which courses of study shall be grouped,and authorize such courses of study and areas of study to be used in lieu of or in addition to any prescribed course of study or area of study;

- (d) establish procedures by which and the conditions under which books and other learning materials are selected and approved by the Minister;
- (e) select and approve for use in schools textbooks, library books, reference books and other learning materials; ... (Province of Ontario, 1974: 11-12).

Although publicly controlled schools are operated by local school boards, the centralization and consolidation of these boards means that Provincial Ministries of Education can keep a close rein on curriculum and educational programmes. To be sure, the state will endorse those programmes, and set guidelines for curricula, which will 'benefit' society. I would suggest that the 'best' in intellectual, aesthetic and moral standards and values, as determined to a large degree by state agencies, still reflects the class-based paternalism of early school movements which saw education as an integrative and civilizing force in society.<sup>11</sup> That this type of educational control arbitrarily limits the definition and scope of classroom knowledge is an argument which is glossed over, especially in light of the fact that the school does teach certain 'fundamental' and 'essential' values. These values, however, reinforce the legitimacy of the existing social system and serve to 'naturalize' and mystify conflict and the nature of exploitation in society.

It has been mentioned that the state has financial and administrative control over education. Where does this leave teachers when it comes to curriculum control and development? Briefly, two points can be mentioned. First, the Provincial administrations play a key role in deciding the terms of teacher certification and the content of teacher training. For instance, in respect of teachers' colleges in Ontario, the Minister may

8. -- (1)

- (r) (i) define courses of study and subjects to be taught,
- (ii) recommend reference books and library books,

(iii) approve textbooks,

(iv) determine the number of terms and the dates upon which each term begins and ends, and

(v) grant Bachelor of Education degrees; ...  
(Province of Ontario, 1974: 13).

Second, where teachers desire to have greater participation in the development of the curriculum, indications are that this interest is based more on opportunity for greater autonomy or for greater emphasis on local and regional issues (Martin and Macdonell, 1978), rather than constituting an attempt to depart in any radical fashion from the general values currently being taught. The general pattern of political 'neutrality' on the part of teachers in the classroom, however, does have its exceptions as evidenced Harp and Betcherman's (1980) paper on teacher organizations.

Needless to say, the principal agent of educational change for the past three decades has been the government. There are several factors which help to explain the government's positive attitude toward education in the recent past. The post-World War Two period saw many changes take place in Canadian society. Employment opportunities continued to shift from agriculture to manufacturing, and then to service jobs (COPSE, 1972). With intensive family formation and an increasing birth rate we experienced the 'Baby Boom', and as these children grew older it became necessary to fill an expanding and changed economy with educated workers. The new economic theory of "Human Capital" called for a highly qualified manpower and the ready absorption of graduates into well-paying jobs served to reinforce beliefs in the value of education (Harvey, 1974). This was the era of the 'Sputnik syndrome' when the Russian satellite Sputnik I touched off a nation-wide cold war trauma in the United States. The American drive to protect their

technical and scientific leadership by making heavy investments in education influenced the federal and provincial governments' roles in the funding and expansion of educational facilities. Again, the causes of higher employment levels and Canada's lag behind the U.S. in its per capita gross national product were thought to stem from a lag in education. Education, then, was seen as a crucial factor in economic growth and prosperity in a technological age.

With close ties between the educational system and the economy the amount of learning one obtained became synonymous with the amount of one's life earnings. In recent years, however, as times get tough for capitalism, educational participation has taken on added significance. In that there appears to be a direct relationship between educational attainment and participation rates in the labour force (Martin and Macdonell, 1978), education is seen by the student as a valued commodity. The instrumental value of education is increased by virtue of the fact that employers have come to perceive education as more of a screening process than a prerequisite for job performance. The result of this credentialism is twofold, as Bleasdale (1978: 30) explains:

Raising the educational ante has induced an artificial scarcity of talent, but it also latently served to exacerbate a commodity fetishism of certificates and degrees perceived as symbols of knowledge, consumed as a means in acquiring other commodities.

It is not a case that workers with better educational qualifications are necessarily better than workers with lesser qualifications; rather credentialism is, in part, the response from employers to the supply of workers which have been produced by educational institutions. Thus, credentialism has become "a new form of property holding involving the right to work" (Porter, 1977b: 9).<sup>12</sup>

The linkage between the educational system and the economy is further reflected in the ways in which learning has been socially organized to subserve the requirements of production. On the one hand, we have already pointed out how education is principally seen in terms of its future utility. On the other hand, with the incursion of 'technical rationality' into the sphere of education, 'success' is measured according to the degree of competence in a closely-defined field of knowledge or area of specialization. This sorting process and the compartmentalization of knowledge into specified activities, each governed by its own technical rules and strategies, not only provides the capitalist economy with a technical division of labour, but it also results in the stultification of an integrative and critical consciousness. What is left is a limited form of thought which, to a large extent, simply responds to the determined requirements of technology (Holly, 1975).

From this brief sketch it can be seen that the linkages between the state and economy on the one hand and the educational institution on the other have no little effect on the control and development of curriculum.<sup>13</sup> In that the state in capitalist society is a capitalist state, it can be seen as an agent of the bourgeoisie. As such, measures utilized by the state to influence educational practices will be ideological in character, serving to uphold the interests of the capitalist class. Likewise the relationship between the economy and the school is geared to facilitate the accumulation of capital and thus to maintenance of capitalist relations. The educational process shapes the behaviour of the participants: what we wish to know is how this affects the development of consciousness in students. Recognizing the intimate ties between formal and hidden dimensions of curriculum it is incumbent

upon research to consider both the overt and covert ways in which ideological notions about social reality are manifested in the classroom.

My concern in this paper has been to present the theoretical assumptions which underlie various sociological approaches to the study of curriculum. It was argued that the overdetermined approach has much to offer for investigation which seeks to integrate interactional analysis (the phenomenologist's concern with the management of knowledge) with structural analysis (power and interests). The particular framework outlined above can provide considerable insight into the complex system of power relations underlying the educational process. In addressing the question, 'what gets to count as educational knowledge?' it recognizes the limitations of the 'given' approach which, in focusing on school attainment, ignores the content of the curriculum. Likewise, the overdetermined approach takes to task naive perspectives which look at school knowledge transmission simply as a process of negotiations between teacher and student. In doing so it attempts to situate educational practices in the context of capitalist class relations, acknowledging the complex structural constraints on classroom interaction and educational reform.

### Footnotes

1. The same might be said for certain Marxist approaches, e.g., Bowles and Gintis (1976), which are inclined toward what Karabel and Halsey (1977) call a "hyper-functionalism" that sees a "perfect fit" between the educational system and other major social institutions. Insofar as these approaches assume a functional role for curricula, it is not considered to be problematic and the content of the educational system may be neglected.
2. This is not to say that researchers in this tradition necessarily ignore conflict. However, such analysis tends to cover too much ground in order that a testable explanation for various kinds of social organization can be arrived at. Collins (1977: 124) comments:

Functional analysis too easily operates as a justification for whatever particular pattern exists, asserting in effect that there is a proper reason for it to be so, but failing to state the conditions under which a particular pattern will hold rather than another.
3. "Content", as it is used here, refers to not so much the technical skills and so on which are taught in school, or to the relationship between technological advances and the development of curriculum in accordance to these changes, but to the ideological character of the educational process.
4. In particular, for comments on and criticisms of Young and his associates see Holly (1975: 6-8); Sharp and Green, (1975: 12-13); Karabel and Halsey (1977: 44-61).
5. "Overdetermination" makes reference to the fact that while all relations are not class relations (e.g., teacher-student), these relations and the practices attendant to these relations are contingent upon their articulation with relations arising out of the capitalist mode of production. Thus the class nature of schooling is to be understood by locating it contextually through examination of the exercise of power in capitalist society.
6. This class is primarily responsible for establishing the ideas and institutions which serve to guard the social order. This is not to say however, that members of the capitalist class consciously set about to deceive the people or that intellectuals are participants in a conspiracy to keep the capitalist class in its dominant position. Members of the ruling class are bound and compelled by specific material conditions to represent their interests as the common interests of all members of society. The class which has control over the means of material production not only influences the ideas of those who lack the means of material production, but these ideas can serve to reproduce the existing social relations.
7. My main concern in this paper is with examination of the ruling class and the exercise of its hegemony. A key problem for further research which arises out of this analysis is to elucidate



those traditions and ideas, values and attitudes which run counter to the dominant culture, i.e., to study counter-hegemonic forces, such as student resistance, or teacher militancy.

8. It should be recognized that the meaning of form/content in a specific time/space situation implies varying interpretations on the part of the observers and participants. With regard to sociological research, for example, the study of curriculum by liberals or by Marxists will necessarily be informed by their theoretical vantage points.
9. Smollet (1974) provides an interesting example of this in her article, "Schools and the Illusion of Choice: The Middle Class, and the 'Open' Classroom".
10. Are these repressive values or values of the middle class? Entwistle (1978: 56) argues that, "In fact, in Western culture, these have usually been regarded simply as human values, not distinguishing characteristics of any class, but virtues by reference to which persons are deemed human."
11. Michael Katz in his study of education in American history presents an analysis of the changes in organizational models from the paternalistic voluntarism in the early 1800's to the bureaucratic model which characterizes the public school system today. Significantly, Katz (1977: 393) observes that,

The paternalistic voluntarists and the bureaucrats, of course, saw education as the educator of the people, leading, not reflecting, the general will and, at the least, shaping moral opinions... They hoped for, basically, an increasingly standardization of institutions, practices and culture in American society.

12. An interesting aspect of the relationship between education and occupation is the fact that along with the degradation of work noted by Braverman (1974), the phenomenon of credentialism has meant an increase in the substantial lack of fit between occupational requirements and the level of education one carries into the job situation.
13. For further discussion of linkages between the educational institution, and the state and the economy, see White, 1980.



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## The Limits of Keynesianism: Some Theoretical Observations

John Malcolmson

The history of advanced capitalism is the history of a state-buttressed, state-controlled and state-regulated capitalism. For this reason, it is no longer possible to speak of vital areas and processes which fall outside of this near pervasive blanket of state intervention.

When seen in context, the expansion of the state sector and of state interventionism in general form part of a larger dynamic at work in the advanced capitalist economies. The growth of the service and repair sectors, the proliferation of intermediary functions, the emergence of a complex network of advertising and marketing, the establishment of a growing research sector, the extension of consumer credit - all of these developments and others reflect the increasing technical socialization of the labour process as well as the increasing complexity of the sphere of commodity circulation. All in all, advanced capitalism faces growing difficulties in its attempts to realize value (Mandel, 1978: 401-3).

The expansion of the state sector has absorbed much of the growth in some of these areas. Together with the emergence of state planning and of extensive state involvement in the socialization of private sector costs and risks, this overall expansion can be seen as an attempt, by the state, to assist capital in the transcendence of those barriers it finds in its path. In other words, the state attempts to secure the social existence of capital through the mobilization of counter-tendencies to capitalist crisis.

Thus, despite changes in the nature of capitalism and changes in the nature of state activity, the specific modes of intervention still reflect the attempt to meet certain form-specific needs associated with the maintenance of the capitalist order. Generally speaking,

There is an inherent trend under late capitalism for the State to incorporate an ever greater number of productive and reproductive sectors into the 'general conditions of production' which it finances (Mandel, 1978: 484).

The origins of the modern interventionist state can be traced back to the immediate postwar period. The immediate problem facing capital and the state was one of conversion to a peacetime economy. It had taken a world war to lift international capitalism out of a decade of stagnation and unemployment, during which the social and political cohesion of the capitalist order faced serious challenge. Experiences gained in managing a wartime economy had demonstrated the potential inherent in state intervention, i.e. the ability of the state to virtually end unemployment and to set the economy back on the course of expansion and growth. Clearly, the lessons derived from these experiences were not lost on capital and the state. The conversion to a peacetime economy could not involve a return to the disruptive boom-bust cycle of earlier times. A dismantling of the war machine

could not lead to the threat of a sudden contraction of business activity. The best that might be hoped for was some sort of balance between private sector activity and public sector intervention, a balance that could assure those conditions necessary for continued capital investment and economic growth.

These considerations demonstrate that the growth of state interventionism is not something that can be observed and analysed apart from an analysis of the balance of forces in the class struggle. The state's conversion to a program of fiscal and monetary management (of which commitment to a policy of full employment is but one aspect) was itself a reflection of the need to deflect working class opposition away from any radical alternative. Steps taken in the construction of the welfare state symbolize the effort by the state to integrate labour into a postwar 'settlement' or consensus, something essential for the maintenance of relative stability and class harmony and for the attainment of economic growth. Certain aspects of the welfare state can even be seen as tactical victories for the working class and its organizations, as instances where the working class has been able to "impose its political will on the logic of capital within capitalist relations" (Altwater, 1976: 3). All of these factors suggest that the actual character of state intervention is something largely dependent upon the nature of the class struggle and its outcome (i.e. 'the relative contingency of the political process').

Keynesian economics represents an attempt to guide and theorize the practice of state fiscal and monetary intervention in the advanced capitalist economies.<sup>1</sup> To Keynes, the laissez-faire liberal image of the state (i.e. the best state is that which governs least) was hopelessly inadequate in the face of chronic economic stagnation and

massive unemployment. Classical economy had erred in assuming that the capitalist market was an inherently self-correcting mechanism and that any prolonged imbalance between supply and demand, producing unemployment or idle capacity, was impossible. In the Keynesian system, the central postulate was that market equilibrium was possible at any level of employment, the latter being dependent upon the volume of effective demand. Full employment is, therefore, not something towards which an economy will naturally tend. It is, rather an "optimum relationship" to be produced only by either "accident or design" (Keynes, 1965: 28). The unimpeded interaction of market forces is something just as likely to produce stagnation as prosperity, a colossal wastage of resources instead of their efficient employment. Thus, the ostensible object of government policy was the attainment of full employment via a policy of selective state intervention. The short term manipulation of key economic variables by the state is what is termed economic 'fine-tuning', a practice designed to level out the disruptive boom-bust cycle of capitalism and to attain a state of permanent 'quasi-boom'.

In the Keynesian system, a given rate of investment and a given 'propensity to consume'<sup>2</sup> will together bring forth an actual volume of effective demand which, in turn, will determine a definite level of employment consistent with economic equilibrium. When effective demand, the sum of the demand for capital and consumption goods, is equal to a nation's total income (i.e. total savings = total investments), the economic system will operate at a full employment equilibrium. If effective demand falters, then savings will exceed investments, total income will drop and unemployment will result. In setting forth this model, Keynes was explicitly resurrecting the "great puzzle of effective demand" which, with Ricardo, had vanished from the realm of



orthodox economic theory to lead a subterranean existence in the under-worlds of Gesell, Douglas and Marx (Keynes, 1965: 32). And in doing so, Keynes was concentrating his attack upon Say's Law, the idea of a self-equilibrating market. The mere fact that savings and investments may be defined the same way (as the excess of income over consumption) does not necessarily mean that the two will always tend to coincide in actual practice (Keynes, 1965: 63, 83-4). The factors which determine the former are distinct and separate from those influencing the latter. In the final analysis, the nature of the equilibrium will depend upon the level of aggregate effective demand.

In a mature capitalist economy, Keynes felt there were valid reasons for suspecting that the level of effective demand would be insufficient to produce equilibrium at full employment. Increased income will augment consumption but not by so much as the initial increase in income. Keynes, (1965: 27) attributed this to the psychological propensity to consume consequent upon the increase in material affluence. Therefore to increase and justify increased employment,

there must be an amount of current investment sufficient to absorb the excess of total output over what the community chooses to consume when employment is at the given level. For unless there is this amount of investment, the receipts of the entrepreneurs will be less than is required to induce them to offer the given amount of employment (Keynes, 1965: 27).

Thus, the question of investment was central to the Keynesian model. The health of a mature capitalist economy depends upon the maintenance of an appropriate level of capital investment. Acceptance of this principle leads, in Keynes' mind,

to the same conclusion as before, namely, that employment can only increase pari passu with an

increase in investment; unless, indeed, there is a change in the propensity to consume (1965: 98).

However, as with consumption, a mature capitalist economy tended to throw up barriers to the productive investment of capital which served to weaken the incentive to invest on the part of the individual capitalist (i.e. the saturation of investment outlets, the declining marginal efficiency of capital etc.). Additional factors such as the prevailing 'business mood' and the cost of borrowing might induce an investment strike as capital exercises a 'liquidity preference'. All in all, these factors held out the distinct possibility of a secular tendency to stagnation as the incentive to private investment weakened.

The object of state policy, given these factors, was to ensure the attainment of a full employment equilibrium through the use of fiscal and monetary devices designed to strengthen both the incentive to invest as well as the society's 'propensity to consume'. Here, the overriding importance of investment was clear. As David Horowitz states (1973: 92),

By stressing the pre-eminent significance of the investment decision, in determining the level of output and employment, and by illuminating the dependence of that decision on the expectation of investors, Keynes provided the key to a theory of fiscal politics which would show that the pattern of government spending must fall predominantly within the channels coincident with business interest.

Keynes was enough of a realist to know that any state authority that failed to provide the necessary framework for business expansion would soon find the economy in the throes of a major depression. Indeed, it was the duty of the state to ensure that investment and accumulation materialized, even despite what might be the temporary whims of capital. Keynes writes:

It is not the ownership of the instruments of production which it is important for the state

to assume. If the state is able to determine the aggregate amount of resources devoted to augmenting the instruments and the basic rate of reward to those who own them, it will have accomplished all that is necessary. Moreover, the necessary measures of socialization can be introduced gradually and without a break in the general traditions of society (1965: 378).

The object is therefore one of saving capitalism and for this reason it is completely erroneous to view Keynes as a socialist. In the words of Maurice Bobb,

despite an inclination épater les bourgeois and to patronize heretics, he went no further than the position of an interventionist liberal, alive to the needs of his time (1977: 220).

In practical terms, Keynesian fiscal and monetary policy aims at the stimulation of both investment and consumption. "For it is unlikely," Keynes writes,

that full employment can be maintained, whatever we may do about investment, with the existing propensity to consume. There is room, therefore, for both policies to operate together; - to promote investment and, at the same time, to promote consumption... I should readily concede that the wisest course is to advance on both fronts at once (1965: 325).

To this end, the state should attune its monetary policy (lower interest rates, a flexible money supply) and its fiscal policy (taxation, subsidization, welfare spending etc.) in the attempt to surmount the overall deficiencies in the level of effective demand.

Keynes' approach to the problems of capital accumulation, with its emphasis upon the key variable, effective demand, is indicative of a highly abstract and ahistorical conceptualization of the nature of production founded upon capital. In general, the aggregates and categories used by Keynes posit the essence of capitalist production as production for use and consumption, and not as production for value. "Capital", writes Keynes, "is not a self-subsistent entity existing apart from

consumption" (Keynes, 1965: 106). Consumption must be seen as the object and purpose of all economic activity (Mattick, 1974: 11). The implications of this approach are far reaching in a number of areas.

To take a concrete example, the Keynesian concept of 'national income' (i.e. consumption + investment) establishes a separation between its two major components only to blur the distinction by evaluating the significance of these components primarily in terms of their impact upon the level of effective demand. Shigeto Tsuru (1968: 194) writes,

The result is the Keynesian concept of national income which has only one dimension, that of being consumable sooner or later. The part which is consumed during a given period is called 'consumption', and the remainder in whatever physical form it may be, is called 'investment'.

Tsuru goes on to demonstrate that a methodology based upon what is essentially crude aggregation cannot accurately gauge what he terms the 'productivity effect' of consumption and investment, or the actual significance of consumption expenditure and investment outlays vis-a-vis the accumulation of capital.

Paul Mattick (1974: 116) develops a similar point in greater detail in his discussion of the role of the 'multiplier' within the Keynesian system. Given the existence of idle capacity and unemployed workers during a depression, state expenditures are seen as 'pump priming' devices that stimulate a resumption of private sector business activity. An initial expenditure in the area of public works or welfare assistance initiates a chain reaction of subsequent expenditures (the precise quantitative dimensions of which depend upon the society's marginal propensity to consume), thereby multiplying the cumulative impact of the initial outlay. Given this process, state expenditure might well be seen as a panacea whose curative powers are sufficient to overcome the shortfall in effective demand.

However, as Mattick points out, there are serious problems inherent in the multiplier concept, which, in the final analysis, are rooted in the nature of state intervention and state spending within a capitalist economy. Firstly,

the multiplier concept creates the illusion... that any given amount of additional income can multiply itself merely by travelling from one group to another. Actually, of course, this is not so, just as a change in the velocity of money does not imply a change in its quantity or in the quantity of commodities in circulation (Mattick, 1974: 158).

He adds that it is only when money spent in consumption finds its way into productive investment that any real increase in income takes place.

Secondly, a problem emerges because the state is not a capitalist and must therefore finance its activities out of revenue in the form of taxes, or out of borrowing. Whereas the private sector is involved in the direct creation of surplus value, direct state involvement in production is usually confined to a series of non-productive enclaves vital for the economy as a whole but unprofitable for private investment and exploitation. For this reason, almost all forms of state expenditure must be seen as forms of consumption of surplus value within the context of the capitalist system as a whole. Even in the case of government contracts with the private sector, the costs associated with this kind of induced production as well as the profits that accrue to the private suppliers must be financed out of taxes on the private productive base or out of borrowings against the future profitability of that same base (Mattick, 1974: 118). In either case the state appropriates a portion of the surplus value generated in the private sector and for this reason alone state finance must be labelled unproductive from the standpoint of the whole system (Yaffe, 1973: 51).

The multiplier effect of state spending is therefore largely illusory, despite the fact that the stimulus of government spending may help arrest a downward trend in business activity. Mattick (1974: 159) notes that as state spending may ease unemployment and increase production in the private sector,

it may under special conditions, induce an acceleration of private investments. If this should be the case, it would increase total income by more than that brought forth by deficit-spending, but this 'multiplication' would be due directly to the additional profitable investments, not to the initial spending.

In the case of deficit spending, the overall complex of capitalist valorization problems find their expression in the cumulative growth of the national debt. Attempts to rationalize this indebtedness usually rest upon the claim that a rising national income will offset the problems associated with increased borrowing and debt servicing. It is, however, impossible to gauge the stimulative impact of deficit financing if comparisons are made on the basis of total national income. As Mattick states,

the growing national debt cannot be related to total national income, but only to that part of the total which has not been injected into the economy by the government. It is by counting an expense as an income that the illusion arises that the growing national debt is neutralized by a rising national income (1974: 162).

The upshot of this analysis may be summed up as follows. State spending can only be viewed as a consumption of surplus value, or better, a redistributive appropriation and consumption of surplus value with an aim to establish and maintain certain, historically-specific 'general material conditions of production' in the era of advanced capitalism. This expenditure cannot be viewed simply as one vital input amidst a complex of socially-necessary tasks and functions which together constitute



the system of production based upon capital.<sup>3</sup> A perspective like this tends to abstract the technical aspects of an advanced division of labour away from the social relations which constitute capitalist production as a valorization process, and, in doing so, it loses sight of the fact that only labour undertaken within the capital relation can be productive of surplus value. The result is an analysis which downplays the limits of state intervention, which, ultimately, stem from the fact that the state is not a capitalist and that the state must therefore appropriate and consume surplus value in the course of its interventions. Given this understanding, state expenditure and state intervention can best be seen as "indirectly productive for capital in the sense used by Marx" - they constitute essential moments apart from capital which, nonetheless, make a vital contribution to the social conditions of capitalist reproduction (Fine and Harris, 1976: 104-5).

The limits of contemporary state intervention inhere in the very nature of the form-specific functions the state is called upon to provide within the context of advanced capitalism. The use of fiscal and monetary devices to attenuate the business cycle and prevent the re-emergence of dangerously high levels of unemployment has served to displace the locus of contradiction and crisis to the level of the state itself. The cumulative growth of public debt, the mounting burden of debt servicing and the bias of permanent inflation together represent the price paid by 'capital in general' for the maintenance of state-buttressed 'prosperity' amidst conditions of declining profitability in vital sectors and growing difficulties in the sphere of commodity circulation. State intervention in the form of 'demand management' and an expanded money supply has served to arrest the necessary destruction of excess capitals in the economic crisis and to hinder the concentration and

re-organization of the capital structure necessary for a profitable upswing in business activity (Itoh, 1978: 6-7). The use of credit leverage and deficit financing to further this end has led to the current phenomenon of 'stagflation', a steady and seemingly inexorable rise in the cost of living amidst either sluggish or non-existent growth rates. All in all, capital in crisis stands in need of a depression, a 'shake-out' that the state dare not risk in view of its likely social and political consequences. The current strategy of Keynesian intervention, based as it is upon the use of fiscal and monetary means for the redistribution of existing values, cannot penetrate to the heart of the matter for, as Fine and Harris note, "the dominant recuperative force in crisis is the re-organization of capital and not the redistribution of values" (1976: 111).

Given this situation, the efficacy of the Keynesian devices is severely limited by the expansion of state debt on one side, and the risk of refuelling inflation without any substantial improvement in business activity, on the other (Itoh, 1978: 9). The growing obsolescence of Keynesianism is reflected in the fact that

The current high level of unemployment does not basically result from the needs of distributional struggle (although this plays a secondary related role), but from the need for a break in the circuit of capital to release money, means of production and labour-power so that they can, at a later stage of the cycle, when the expansion capital's circuit is renewed, be re-employed in a circuit based on a re-structuring of productive capital (Fine and Harris, 1976: 112).

In the meantime, the crisis of a state-buttressed capitalism increasingly manifests itself in a crisis of state finance. The stage is thus set for a round of spending cuts, as the state attempts to 'rationalize' its spending and taxation priorities to suit the valorization needs of capital (O'Connor, 1973). In the long run, the continued existence of



the welfare state, as it is currently known, is placed in serious jeopardy.

The current crisis of capital, the fiscal crisis of the state and the growing impotence of Keynesian economics all point in the final analysis to the dynamic, yet crisis-ridden course of capitalist development. State intervention, as the continuous and ongoing management of vital economic processes, emerged in a particular conjuncture in response to particular social and economic pressures. For a certain specified period, the efficacy of this intervention was clearly seen and hence unquestioned. Yet, the crisis of the 1970's demonstrates that a state-managed and state-regulated capitalism is still capitalism, still subject to the inner laws of motion that characterize capitalist production, and still subject to the barriers and limits that inhere in the form of capital itself.

For this reason, the growing obsolescence of the Keynesian prescription can best be seen as reflecting the transition of the capitalist mode of production to a higher phase of development which, in turn, will posit the form-specific functions of the state in a new and qualitatively different manner. Whatever the change in state form and function, it must, nevertheless, remain consistent with the form of capital itself and the immanent necessities posited by this form. All in all, the state must always face up to the need of securing the political and social domination of capital and, in doing so, secure the social existence of capital itself.

#### Conclusion: Post-Keynesianism?

In a Wall Street Journal story, dated September 6, 1974, the following statement is attributed to Robert Gordon, then president of the American Economic Association:

under Keynes' influence, we've developed a theory of aggregate demand but haven't even started to develop a theory of aggregate supply (quoted in Morris, 1974: 3)

In its own way, an admission like this one reflects a growing feeling that Keynesian economics, and modern economic theory in general, does not provide adequate insight into basic problems regarding capital accumulation and production, problems made more acute with the current economic crisis.

Current state intervention and emerging future trends in this area also reflect this. Given the predicament of 'stagflation', the atmosphere is ripe for the state to undertake new departures in setting the economy back on track, departures that push state intervention beyond the ambit of traditional Keynesian practice. Massive cutbacks in health, education and social services, inroads into the collective bargaining process and controls on wage increases all mark the arrival of a new phase of state intervention. The precise nature and direction of this new phase is hard to determine as of yet, but it will likely involve efforts to redistribute income away from working-class consumption, to co-opt organized labour into surrendering gains made over decades of struggle and to mobilize state funds in the attempt to remove the structural barriers to sustained capital accumulation. An image of the future that lies in store for the western world might be drawn from an article in the October, 1974 issue of Business Week. In discussing the problems and imperatives facing American capitalism, the author reaches the following matter-of-fact conclusion:

Some people will obviously have to do with less...  
Indeed, cities and states, the home mortgage market,  
small business and the consumer will all get less  
than they want because the basic health of the U.S.  
is based on the basic health of its corporations  
and banks: the biggest borrowers and the biggest  
lenders (quoted in Sweezy and Magdoff, 1975: 2).

## NOTES

1. There are basic problems involved in simply equating state interventionism with Keynesianism. As has been stated, much of what came to constitute the Keynesian prescription in practice dates back at least as far as World War I and, in addition, certain aspects of modern state practice cannot be traced back to Keynes. In spite of this, Keynesianism does represent a general theorization of state intervention in advanced capitalism. It is with this general connexion in mind that this paper is based upon the admittedly rather loose and simplistic identification of the two entities.
2. Keynes (1965: 8-10) defines 'propensity to consume' as the ensemble of subjective and objective factors that guide the consumption habits and the decision whether to spend or save of individuals and classes.
3. Ian Gough (1975) argues that it is wrong to see state spending as non-productive for this reason.

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## The State of Cultural Theory: A Review of Past and Present Fashions

Debra Clarke

It is always important to situate distinctive theoretical developments within the historical conditions of their emergence, yet, in order to fully appreciate the substance of developments within cultural theory, the task seems imperative. There are several reasons. Firstly, much of what can now, in retrospect, be identified as distinctive modes of cultural thought arose within and remained peculiar to a specific geographically-bound location, whether a nation or a continent -- nowhere, for example, is there more apparent a fundamental rift between theoretical modes than that between North America and the European nation-states. Secondly, and paradoxically, a close inspection of the essential propositions characteristic of each reveals some profound parallels, despite the diversity of their material origins. The points of interpenetration between and among new and old schools of cultural thought are sometimes considerable, and the analysis of relations between schools



can often tell more about the way culture has been 'thought' than the analysis of any single case. Thirdly, cultural theorizing is at the present moment so confused and unstable that any discussion of its material development can only aid understanding. The present discussion works towards that end.

One of the more visible cases of cross-fertilization between modes is the relation between the Frankfurt theorists<sup>1</sup> and U.S. currents of the war and post-war periods. While the Frankfurt theorists summoned a considerable authority in their own right (and, importantly, in their own place and time), their work also later shaped nascent American modes of thought about culture: indirectly, through the export of whole propositions and cultural conceptions; and directly, through the exile of individual Frankfurt theorists to the United States. Their importance for the subsequent development of theoretical traditions in their adopted homeland, especially for the development of mass society theory, should not be underrated. The seeming novelty of McLuhanism in the 1960s supplied one of the few contrasts to the otherwise unilinear development of cultural theory in North America throughout the post-war era.

These developments will be outlined first, while later discussion will look to the very different course traversed by European theorists, especially those in Britain, a major site of the current theoretical struggles. It is here that more contemporary attempts to theorize culture have been vigorously pursued. A major concern will be to trace the origin and development of the new 'cultural studies', most closely associated with the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham. Lastly, and relatedly, there will be a brief attempt to isolate some sources of the current divisions within "Marxist cultural theory" and to assess, in light of these divisions, the

possibilities for a truly materialist analysis of culture.

Space limitations demand that a good deal be assumed, and that important facets of the literature be excluded. It will not, for example, be possible to outline with rigorous detail the major precepts that delineate each perspective. Instead, our prime purpose is to demonstrate the operation and recurrence of several overriding weaknesses threaded through all of these attempts at theorization; among them, the absence of a well-integrated model of stratification or class conflict. It will be argued that the development and articulation of the assorted theoretical modes was in every case heavily conditioned by (1) the historical circumstances of the assorted cultural theorists, which in turn shaped (2) the means in which 'culture' was conceptualized: aesthetically, anthropologically, or as something more broadly social. Much of this is revealed through the treatment (or 'non-treatment', which is more often the case) of class conflict or even simply some notion of 'social' conflict devoid of class connotations. The failure to incorporate stratification models into their theories about culture led these various theorists to start with either a non-stratified or crudely stratified notion of the way that societies are organized, and hence left them ill-equipped to account for the place of culture therein.

#### The Radical Pessimism of the Frankfurt Theorists

Established in 1923 as a (somewhat unique) centre for Marxist studies, the Institute for Social Research at Frankfurt was concerned throughout the twenties with the problems of labour and the labour movement, and combined solid empirical work with serious theoretical analysis. Anderson (1976: 32) claims that the Institute occupied a pivotal point of juncture between "Western" and "Eastern" Marxist currents during the twenties, and thus its trajectory was crucial to

the progression of Marxist theory in inter-war Europe. The year 1930, however, threw doubt on its role when Horkheimer assumed control of the Institute (following Grunberg's retirement), at the same time that Lukacs was exiled to Austria and Gramsci was censored, in the interests of his personal safety, even while in prison. Horkheimer was a philosopher whereas his predecessor was a historian. At the outset he established a new orientation to the Institute's work, one that meant less concern with the science of historical materialism and a greater concern with "social philosophy". Soon afterwards the Institute ceased to publish the Archives for the History of Socialism and the Workers' Movement, and in its place introduced the new Journal of Social Research. However tamed in its outward appearances, the 1933 Nazi victory drove most Institute members to the United States, where a new Institute was constituted at Columbia University a year later. Here it was transferred "into a political environment devoid of a mass working class movement even formally committed to socialism, or of any substantial Marxist tradition" (Anderson, 1976: 33).

By the time of its return to Frankfurt in 1949-50, the Institute's period in the States, and the conditions of that period, had already circumscribed the character of the work. Most of the formative work on aesthetic theory, however, was elaborated and shaped during the pre- and post-exile moments of the thirties, a time of titanic class struggles in Austria, France, and Germany. It was in the turbulent climate of this period that the Frankfurt theorists concluded that Marx's projection of capitalist development could no longer be sustained: massive state intervention in the market, the reification of the place of technology and science within the mode of production, and the growth of a consumptionist working class rendered, in their view, the classic Marxist idea

of class struggle obsolete (see Swingewood, 1977: 10-18). Therborn argues that the impact of their experiences with Fascism was so great that it 'was reified in their subsequent critique of American society, preventing them from making a scientific analysis of American monopoly capitalism, or developing a revolutionary practice' (1970: 69).

What is most problematic about the Frankfurt defeatism is that it survived long enough to colour a good deal of later theoretical work (their own and that of others). A theory of mass society or mass culture was worked out well before their exile to the United States, where it was transferred wholesale to the somewhat different social circumstances of a North American case. The historical specifics of 1930s Germany were generalized to explain the underdevelopment of working class revolutionary potential throughout the Western capitalist world, and it would not be much of a stretch to argue that their historical fatalism, born out of a complex and highly particularized historical moment, grew to underline and characterize both orthodox and unorthodox Marxist analyses of culture. The original impetus to the construction of mass society propositions, complete with visions of "masses duped into false beliefs and bourgeois values", re-appears in later theories of "late capitalism" where, in the work of too many contemporary Marxists, the very use of the phrases "implies that the historically necessary collapse of capitalism has been averted by the conscious ideological and cultural manipulation of the bourgeoisie over the proletariat" (Swingewood, 1977: x).

While it is scarcely a widely held position, Swingewood argues that the development of the capitalist mode of production has served to augment, and not destroy, civil society. Its development has led to a highly complexified social structure where the key institutions of trade unions, political parties, professional associations, and

communications apparatuses are not dominated by a massive and omnipotent state. On the contrary, these institutions exercise a tremendous and unprecedented MEDIATING INFLUENCE that has only now become fully realized in social practice. The emergence of a new and strengthened network of social relations (wherein, for example, working class organizations come to the fore) means that "a far more delicate balance of forces is now capitalism's most characteristic feature" (1977: ix-x). Those contemporary Marxists who suffer the hangover of Frankfurt-style defeatism operate with a monolithic concept of social structure that cuts short the dialectical movement: as Swingewood expresses it, "of course the modern state grows in size and complexity, but as capitalism strengthens the sphere of direct domination so it necessarily creates the basis of a powerful civil society" (1977: x).

Although Swingewood never identifies his alignment explicitly, this is a more properly Gramscian position. To briefly illustrate the kinship with Gramsci, we can simply cite a statement from a 1917 Avanti! article, titled, significantly enough, "Towards a Cultural Association":

At a certain moment in its development and its history, the proletariat becomes aware that the complexity of its life lacks a necessary organization. Thus, it creates one for its own ends, with its strength, and with its good will ... this need will also come into being and be felt in other parts of Italy (other than Turin, where institutions like the Co-operative Alliance were already strong). And the proletariat movement will thereby grow in compactness and victorious energy (Gramsci, 1975: 97).

At the very least, then, there is a need to re-introduce a dynamic into theories about culture. Plainly, there is a good deal more to the process than some simple one-way (and therefore inevitable) domination from above; yet this one-sided and 'one-dimensional' account underlies and pervades the works of both the Frankfurt theorists (notably Adorno and Marcuse) and later U.S. mass society theorists.

Swingewood's argument also suggests that at the root of Frankfurt and mass society conceptions lies the equally fundamental problem of agency (and with it, the problem of determination). The radical pessimism of the Frankfurt theorists amounted to historicism, and traced to their own 'crisis of confidence' in the recalcitrant capacities of the working class. The problem of mediation was, at this early stage, resolved through elimination; the supposed "mass society" contained no mediatory or oppositional institutions, LET ALONE working class institutions and organizations. Once mediation is tossed out, notions of agency quickly follow; the working class was deemed somehow inherently unable to counter-vail the overpowering reifications brought about with the Fascist regime. Faced with a world that appeared beyond human control, a concept of human agency became difficult to digest, and hence the Frankfurt theorists preferred to regard workers (or rather, masses) as resigned and passive, fully prey to powerful, emergent political movements like Nazism (see Swingewood, 1977: 11-12).

The 'crisis of confidence' in working class potential and in the mediating possibilities of particular institutions is evident in the work of Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse, and numerous others writing at much later points (see, for example, Sallach, 1974). The notion of a weak civil society is re-affirmed in Mills' influential work, The Power Elite, published in 1956. One might usefully ask how it is that Gramsci managed to surpass the problem in his theorizations about culture and working class potential. Is it possible to introduce a concept of agency without instantly inviting charges of voluntarism (to which Gramsci is always subject)? The Frankfurt kind of radical pessimism does not enter his thought, although Gramsci pondered the same problems while subject to similar historical conditions. Yet for Adorno, Horkheimer, and the others,



history was everything. During the thirties, these thinkers bore witness to the rapid rise of fascism and the complete collapse of European socialism; it seemed that the forces of total reaction had seized the working class and that neither liberal democracy nor the labour movement could withstand the pressures or respond with sufficient strength. Many years later, Horkheimer disclosed the reasoning behind their original affiliation with Marxist thought:

Already near the end of the twenties, certainly by the beginning of the thirties, we were convinced of the probability of a National Socialist victory, as well as of the fact that it could be met only through revolutionary actions. That it needed a world war we did not yet envisage at that time. We thought of an uprising in our own country and because of that, Marxism won its decisive meaning for our thought (foreword to Jay, 1973).<sup>2</sup>

Whatever 'decisive meaning' Marxism might have had at that early stage was soon extinguished when it became apparent that the collapse of liberal democracy would come about "not in the way Marx had predicted but rather from the combined forces of totalitarian politics (fascism) and totalitarian economics (the growth of giant monopolies and cartels and the fusion of banking and industrial capital)" (Swingewood, 1977: 13). This made possible their desertion of orthodox Marxist principles of determination and led ultimately to a more or less complete loss of commitment to a Marxist account of capitalist development. There are parallels here with the theoretical results of similar disenchantments among British Marxists of the 60s and 70s, and these will be discussed later. At this point it should simply be stressed that the absence of a spontaneous uprising, originating within the German people, led Horkheimer and the others to dismiss the working class entirely as a potentially revolutionary force -- not just the German working class, but the working class-in-general, and this in turn enabled them to easily transfer their conclusions to the American case, where the U.S.



'culture industry' (a concept preferred to 'mass culture') could be equated in its consequences with the German fascist state.

Within this account lies a crucial difference between their conclusions and those of Gramsci. Whereas the Frankfurt theorists developed their notions about cultural potentials and about the future of capitalism itself on the basis of the historical specifics of their own time and place, Gramsci took as his task the development of a whole theory of revolution and of the state THROUGH his analysis of 'what went wrong' in 1930s Italy. This was the raw material of his analysis of 'late capitalism' and of the state, and on this basis Gramsci attempted to specify the appropriate material-cultural conditions under which revolution might be possible and to formulate revolutionary strategies. The difference in theoretical outcomes also points to Gramsci's position as simultaneously Marxist theorist and key political actor of his period -- not true of the Frankfurt theorists, who chose to abandon the political struggles of their homeland and to make sense of these struggles only once safely in exile.

Apart from the kind of elitism contained in their dismissal of the working class, there is, in the work of Adorno and Horkheimer particularly, a familiar elitist conception of culture, though in a somewhat disguised form, where 'high' culture is the means to transform social order through the spread of a critical consciousness. 'Critical' is used in a sense that echoes the appeals of Matthew Arnold (see later discussion). Although the charge is always easy to level, there is also an idealism at work in their underlying theory (or 'non-theory') of social change, one that is later wholly adopted by mass society theorists in the United States. It is most apparent in their later analyses of 'modern' (i.e. U.S.) totalitarianism, where mass culture itself is seen to be the major determinant.

On the one hand, it is possible to draw at least a tentative epistemological parallel between the early Frankfurt work (i.e. pre-1940) and so-called 'immanent structural analysis' (see Slater's argument, 1974). One of the Institute's official histories explained that "we interpret art as a kind of code language for processes taking place within society, which must be deciphered by means of critical analysis" (cited in Jay, 1973: 177). On the other hand, Jay suggests (1973: 178) that their sociology of art refused to reduce cultural phenomena to ideological reflexes of class interests. It is more certain that Adorno, at least, refused to engage in a class analysis of culture; instead, he argued that "the task of criticism must be not so much to search for the particular interest-groups to which cultural phenomena are to be assigned, but rather to decipher the general social tendencies which are expressed in these phenomena and through which the most powerful interests realize themselves" (1967: 30). It seems that Adorno and the others (perhaps including Benjamin) were unable to glean anything more than a crude rudiment of cultural theory out of orthodox Marxism, which, in their view, reduced all culture to 'a bourgeois swindle' and all art to false consciousness or ideology. Exasperated by a vain search for a theory of substance in Marx, the Frankfurt theorists substituted their own "dialectical or immanent critique of art" which "takes seriously the principle that it is not ideology in itself which is untrue but rather its pretension to correspond to reality" (Adorno, 1967: 32). Disastrously, it effectively turned Marx and Marxism upside down, and became inductively non-dialectical. One example of the attempt at a 'dialectical anti-reductionism' lies in Adorno's treatment of one major Marxist category, commodity fetishism. On this point (among others) Adorno disagreed with Benjamin, to whom he wrote on

2 August 1935 that "the fetish character of commodities is not a fact of consciousness, but dialectic in the eminent sense that it PRODUCES consciousness" (cited in Jay, 1973: 181; emphasis added).

More evidence of the Frankfurt antagonism to Marxist orthodoxy can be found in their relations with Benjamin, and particularly in their distrust of his relationship with Brecht. Brecht was admired by the Institute members for his literary and theatrical accomplishments and simultaneously despised for his 'crude materialism'. There are important ways in which Benjamin's work distinguishes itself from the work of Adorno, Horkheimer, and notably Lowenthal, and significantly enough, Benjamin's biography and his pre-war experiences set him considerably apart from the others. Throughout the thirties, for example, he continually resisted the pleas of other Institute members to join them in New York, arguing, as late as 1938, that 'there are still positions in Europe to defend' (cited in Jay, 1973: 197). Benjamin never did make it to the United States, and ultimately committed a tragically needless suicide when denied passage across the Franco-Spain border during a final, resigned effort to flee Europe in 1940 (see Jay, 1973: 197-198). The Institute had not been "entirely enthusiastic about the brand of Marxism Benjamin adopted in the mid-twenties" (Jay, 1973: 201). Unlike the others, Benjamin first encountered historical materialism immediately following the first war and, unlike the others, was active in the pre-WWII Zionist movement, president for a time of the Berlin Free Student Association, and frequent contributor to the journal of Gustav Wyneken's Youth Movement, Der Anfang (Jay, 1973: 159).

In addition to the Institute's discomfort with his acceptance of Brecht's 'crude materialism', Adorno and others were disturbed that Benjamin seemed to share Brecht's optimism about the revolutionary

potential of popular art and technological innovation. On the other hand, Brecht's attitude towards the Institute was not altogether supportive; he regarded them all as 'Tui-intellectuals' who prostituted themselves for American foundation support (Jay, 1973: 201-202). There is also considerable evidence to suggest that Benjamin's essays (including the seminal piece, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction") were often considered 'too radical for their taste' and substantially censored prior to their publication in the Zeitschrift (Jay, 1973: 206).

Benjamin, therefore, and his 'radical optimism' should be set apart from the general work of the Institute prior to 1940 and from what is now referred to as 'the Frankfurt school', since he alone reserved hope for the progressive nature of politicized, collectivized art that accompanied the (mass) mechanical reproduction of artistic and other cultural commodities. The contrast between Benjamin and Adorno is outlined by Benjamin himself in a letter to the latter: "In my work I sought to articulate the positive moments as clearly as you brought the negative to the fore. I consequently see a strength of your work where a weakness of mine lay" (cited in Jay, 1973: 211). His death in 1940 marked the end of any optimistic, revolutionary, or dialectical thrust in Frankfurt cultural theory, and the Institute's subsequent work on mass culture in the 1940s pursued and became limited to static, non-dialectical, empirical studies of, for example, newspaper content. Now fully settled in America, Institute members proceeded to weld themselves more tightly into this mold by eradicating agency once and for all and by arguing that culture was now completely divorced from material production and life. Horkheimer, for example, sowed the seeds for American mass society theory when he suggested, in a 1942 letter to Lowenthal, that reception and absorption had fused into the

same moment, wiping out very definitively notions of subjectivity, voluntarism, or agency:

You lay too much stress on activity vs. passivity, sphere of production vs. sphere of consumption. You say that the life of the reader is scheduled and governed by what he gets, not by what he does. The truth is, however, that doing and getting (have) become identical in this society (cited in Jay, 1973: 213).

And it was Marcuse who argued in 1937 that "the segregation of cultural life from its material base serves to reconcile man to the inequalities implicit in the latter" (Jay, 1973: 215). Not only was any notion of agency discarded, but so also was any concept of mediation and therefore resistance. In light of these developments, the historical and intellectual background to Marcuse's One-Dimensional Man of 1964 scarcely needs to be sketched. In so many ways, it marked the crescendo of all previous Frankfurt work, complete with all of its endemic theoretical faults.

#### Radical Pessimism and Conservative Optimism: the U.S.

Jay suggests that it was the Institute's critique of mass culture and its related analysis of the American authoritarian potential that most strongly influenced the texture of American intellectual life (1973: 217); firstly, because a good portion of the work was available in English, and secondly, because it coincided with a growing distrust of mass culture on the part of indigenous American intellectuals. Prior to World War II, sociologists like Robert Park and his student Herbert Blumer had conducted relatively isolated and somewhat more optimistic studies of 'mass society'. The mid-forties, however, witnessed a new and renewed interest in the area, and it quickly became fashionable inside and outside the academy. Riesman (The Lonely Crowd) and others popularized the fashion, and the work of the Institute added substance and momentum to the attack (see Jay, 1973:

Swingewood argues, in response to all theories that first posit a 'mass' of undifferentiated non-persons, that 'consumer capitalism, rather than creating a vast, homogeneous and culturally brutalized mass, generates different levels of taste, different audiences and consumers. Culture is stratified, its consumption differentiated' (1977: 20). Yet so overpowering has been the impact of 'mass' theories on all areas of empirical and other work on culture and communication that only recently has it been possible to re-introduce, or perhaps posit for the first time, the notion of a stratified audience (see, for example, the work of Morley, 1975 and 1980). Moreover, 'culture' itself was reified through the progressive, or rather regressive, articulation of mass society theories. Where, for example, is there any careful, thoroughgoing discussion of what culture really means or any critical re-thinking of the traditional definitions? Furthermore, and this is a condemnatory feature of both the mass society and 'culture industry' arguments, the concept of culture 'is severed from production in all but a general and superficial sense; culture is thus transformed into an independent, autonomous realm of human activity (or lack of activity) explicable in terms of its own norms and concepts' (Swingewood, 1977: 25). Finally, and perhaps most importantly, there is nothing INTRINSICALLY unifying about culture, just as there is nothing intrinsically functional about cultural or ideological state apparatuses; it seems at least as likely that culture can be a divisive force. Indeed, if culture is 'a whole way of life', then there is clearly no such thing as a singular, all-embracing 'culture of capitalism'. There are many cultures, and many cultural forms, some of which are appropriated by class-bound groups and some of which are not -- however, in the long run, one's 'whole way of life' is, necessarily, heavily conditioned by

and intimately bound up with one's place within capitalist social relations of production; consumption merely sumptomatizes this fundamental relation.

The theories of mass society and mass culture that came to characterize much of cultural theorizing in the United States hark back much further than the Frankfurt thinkers to Tonnies' *Gemeinschaft/Gesellschaft* distinction and to the classical works of Comte, Spencer, Durkheim, and Weber on the general theme of the effects of industrialization and urbanization. In its contemporary formulations, the new 'mass' media are linked to 'mass' behaviour and then to a new 'mass' culture or mass society, and all this without benefit of historical analysis. The first major problem, then, with later and current versions of mass society theory is that the existence of media of mass communication is first taken as given, and not explained within an account of historical transformations within capitalism that initiated and fostered the rapid growth of mass market production and the mass reproduction of artistic and cultural commodities, which in turn transformed the media into a 'necessary' and 'natural' feature of class domination. Overwhelmingly obvious is its underlying organic-functionalist model wherein all the pieces of the puzzle (mass media - mass behaviour - mass culture - mass society) fit neatly into their allotted and expected roles, a fault made possible by the ahistoricism of the approach, which severely constrains a thorough de-mystification of the media 'effect'. Among other things, the leap between 'mass media' and 'mass behaviour' is far too great, and, considering the obsession with 'doing empirical work' on the media, it is remarkable that few or no studies set out to establish this alleged relationship empirically. If anything, the volumes of (largely American) empirical studies of 'media effects' are, at best, inconclusive (see Klapper, 1960).



A second major problem concerns the absence of a model of stratification, a silence characteristic of all the approaches discussed here and not unique to U.S. mass society theory, although more outstanding in its case. Even writers situated on the left, like C. Wright Mills, operated with no more than a crude concept of stratification (i.e. one large mass and one small elite or elites), and wholeheartedly absorbed and reiterated the reportedly frightful consequences of mass media production. It was Mills who argued, in The Power Elite, that 'the media, as now organized and operated, are ... a major cause of the transformation of America into a mass society' (1956: 315). In a thoroughly non-Marxist fashion, Mills proceeded to argue that the mass media 'created' new forms of dependence and made 'the (classless) masses' newly vulnerable to greater control UNDER power-wielding elites. Miliband reproduced a similar argument some time later in The State in Capitalist Society (1969) and again in Marxism and Politics (1977). The dependence of the individual is intensified by a lack of reciprocal, obligatory moral attachments to others, spurred on by rapid industrial expansion and the existence of disparate value systems, which in turn forced the individual to rely more on extraneous media of communication than on primary group or interpersonal relations in developing a world-view. The centralized authority of mass communication systems thus came to take precedence over micro-social forces in defining the social world for the individual. At a larger scale, the movement towards mass society creates the requisite conditions for totalitarianism by increasing the isolation of the individual, by instilling a singular and all-pervasive ideology in the interests of the dominant elite(s), and by monopolizing media channels and thereby eliminating all contending ideological options (see Clarke, 1978).

The contribution of the Frankfurt theorists to the development of this powerful argument comes through in two senses. Firstly, it is evident in the concentration on the individual and the psychosocial, which points to the relation between the aesthetic studies of the Frankfurt theorists and their investigations of American authoritarianism conducted in the forties, where the relation between culture and politics was thought to be best understood in psychosocial terms. Mass society theorists, however, took up only the psychosocial and dropped any connection between culture and politics, as well as any hint that culture was or could be politicized. Secondly, their influence can be seen in the denial of any remaining mediating forces that might have survived the rubble of mass society's rise to prominence.

A third major problem with mass society or mass culture theories is the moralism that underlies the arguments. On the left, Mills and Marcuse bemoaned the one-directional and one-dimensional flow of information and appealed to social democracy, defining inequality of access to the means of communication as the central problematic, since it obstructs the free flow of ideas and violates libertarian notions about press freedom: ideas flow freely from the elite(s) to the masses and not vice versa, and therefore are not representative of the general population. Accordingly, there is a need to 'democratize' the communication process such that libertarian ideals can be realized in practice. The assumptive principles of their position were thus libertarian, while their proposals were reformist. At the politico-ideological centre, Wirth (1948), Warner (1962), and others modified the essence of mass society theory in a more positive or optimistic light. The development of mass communications and the unproblematically concomitant emergence of 'mass society' were welcomed and thought to be required integrative

forces, vital to social cohesion. Along with the development of mass communications came a newly democratized culture that permitted the greater participation of subordinate social groups in the 'common life' of society. Equality of access to the means of communication was simply assumed. On the right, Blumer (1951), Van Den Haag (1957), Howe (1957), and others decried the emergence of mass society and its cultural vulgarities. Their works were tainted with a romantic, nostalgic yen for 'traditional values', a sense of 'community spirit', and a return to the stability of the extended family (see Clarke, 1976). McQuail (1969: 35) notes some of the consequences of the latter version:

... the sociology of mass communications has not prospered under the shadow of mass society theory. Not only have inappropriate questions been fostered and alternative ones discouraged, but the very weight of intellectual and ideological force behind these theories has discouraged competitors, and forced opponents to appear in the light of apologists for an existing social order, for capitalism and commercial exploitation, for ugliness and incipient totalitarianism.

The parallels with English 'cultural criticism' are apparent here and will become more apparent through the course of later discussion. In the United States, it meant that much of the evidence for a new 'mass society' was based on the mass production of media commodities, notably radio, television, and film,<sup>3</sup> which in turn fed the distinctively American brand of 'media sociology'. To understand how this particular specialized discipline took shape historically, we need to consider how the rise of a new 'mass culture' came to be ascribed. It was first necessary to ignore the historical prerequisites for the emergence of a 'popular' culture, and the economic changes that contributed to the growth of the middle class and the spread of literacy, each of which in turn presaged the creation of a truly 'mass' audience (see also Bigsby, 1976). Audience size was assumed to be the contingent, and,

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just as the popular literature of the 19th century presupposed a literate public, so the media of the 20th seemed to require for their viability (and profitability) the capacity to satisfy the desires of a large and seemingly homogeneous audience. The new media of 'mass' communication became coterminous with 'mass' or popular culture.

It is easy to see how this superficial account led, in the 'sociology of mass communications', to a narrowed concentration on audience studies and content analyses, to 'uses and gratifications' research and 'effects' studies,<sup>4</sup> many of which took their direction from Lasswell's famous dictum: 'Who says what, in which channel, to whom, with what effects?'. Otto Larsen complained in 1964 that this research "tended to view persons as 'targets' of communications impact rather than as part of a total communication process" (1964: 368 369). Most of the work fitted well within the tradition of post-war U.S. empiricism. By their very nature, therefore, these studies necessarily contributed little to a worthwhile or meaningful understanding of communication, and even less to the understanding of culture.

#### Canada, Innis, and McLuhan

Innis' early analyses of the staples industries led, in his later years, to a special interest in the historical development of communications, and to the production of two major works, Empire and Communications (1950) and The Bias of Communication (1951).<sup>5</sup> While his commitment to 'technological determinism' is still arguable, it is plain in his work on the communications industries that the developing complexities of communications technology were seen as central to understanding communications and to technological innovations in non-media industries. The predominance of the new 'mass' means of communication over 'pre-printing'

media (e.g. clay, papyrus, parchment) and the decline of the oral tradition were both important elements in shaping potentially emergent forms of social organization. In other words, the types of media dominantly featured in a society, once wholly developed, could be expected to determine the type and quality of human associations characteristic of a period.

Innis also argued that any given medium of communication is biased in terms of either time or space, and tends to 'bias' social organization by encouraging the emergence of particular types of institutions to the exclusion of others, and by imposing on these institutions a particular form of organization. 'Space-biased' media, for example, are, according to Innis, causal in the growth of the state, the military, and decentralized and expansionist institutions, whereas 'time-biased' media facilitate the growth of religion, of hierarchical forms of organization, and of contractionist institutions. Thus for Innis, it is the nature of the medium of communication (oral versus written, time-biased versus space-biased) that determines the nature of social organization; a unique yet unverifiable premise that runs contrary to the bulk of sociological knowledge regarding the growth of particular forms of social organization. Moreover, it would be difficult to make the claim that the argument amounts to a distinctive moment in the development of cultural theory per se, since Innis' concerns were largely limited to the development of a macro-theory of the general historical implications of 'landmark' innovations in communications technology.

Following very closely in Innis' footsteps (if not treading directly on his toes),<sup>6</sup> McLuhan also stressed the nature of the medium, as opposed to its content or the organization of production, and like

Innis, placed considerable emphasis on technological developments in the communication industries. However, in McLuhan's case, the effects of the medium were directly related to sensory organization, perception, and thought, rather than to social organization and culture. It seems pointless to fully elaborate McLuhan's notions in the context of this discussion. The utility of his formulations is limited for the same reasons that those of Innis contribute little to the formation of a worthwhile theory of culture.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, McLuhan's position is not at all internally consistent and has fluctuated considerably with time; more recently, his musings have included a fear of the forthcoming 'homogenization' of the masses,<sup>8</sup> which smacks of mass society theory and contradicts, in some very essential ways, his earlier arguments.

#### U.K. Developments: the Foundations of 'Cultural Studies'

A very different sequence of developments characterizes the field of cultural theory in European, especially British, social thought. The differences are exemplified in the work of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, work that will be referred to here as the 'cultural studies' approach.<sup>9</sup> Since, in large measure, the material represents both a culmination and a configuration of all past theoretical legacies, it will be useful to outline the traditions out of which cultural studies emerged, and the succession of later 'influences' that penetrated their work, none of which (and this should be borne in mind) qualify as rigorously Marxist approaches. At least five identifiable 'bodies of influence' account for the direction of the work: (1) the early English 'culture critics' (e.g. Arnold and Leavis); (2) Hoggart, Williams, and works of the 1950s; (3) at around the same time, another crucial initiative in the formation of cultural studies, Thompson's

The Making of the English Working Class, and the significance of cultural histories; (4) the later impact of the work of three neo-Marxist theorists (Althusser, Gramsci, and Poulantzas); and (5) structuralism and semiotics. The latter struck the Centre in two successive waves: the first drew largely from the work of Levi-Strauss and Barthes, and the second, more currently fashionable, takes its cues from Lacan, Kristeva, Derrida, and others in France (now dubbed the 'post-structuralists'). The early influences of the English 'culture critics' (Arnold, Leavis, Hoggart and Williams) will be briefly traced, prior to a discussion of the development of the Birmingham Centre work itself.

(i) Arnold, Leavis, and the 'culture critics'

First, we need to look back a considerable historical distance to the origins of debate about popular culture (see Burke, 1978, for a richly detailed analysis of the 'discovery' of popular culture in early capitalist Europe). Debates about popular culture, and notions about what it is, trace to early responses to the commercialization of culture in the first phase of European capitalism. The debate gathered momentum during the 19th century, and was spearheaded by literary critics and 'men of letters'. One of the most influential of the 19th century sources was Matthew Arnold's Culture and Anarchy, originally published in 1869. Significantly, Arnold emerged out of a tradition of literary criticism, was a poet and literary critic, held posts at Oxford, and so forth. Much of Arnold's now classic formulations about culture grew out of his own disenchantment with the increasingly apparent implications of 'the new industrial order', circa 1850. "I see", he wrote in 1848, "a wave of more than American vulgarity, moral, intellectual, and social, preparing to break over us ..." (cited in Arnold, 1938). Arnold's calls for the



establishment of formalized education under the wing of the state were intended to sophisticate the uncivilized masses made newly vulnerable to cultural deterioration, and parallel those of Egerton Ryerson in Canada. Culture, and especially the indoctrination of the new industrial working class into bourgeois culture, was to Arnold the means to secure order, to inject self-discipline, and, in his words, "to do away with classes (read 'class-based cultures')" (1938: 70). Culture was to occupy the new leisure time afforded to the working class through the arrival of industrialization and the mechanization of factory production. The state was to be cast in the role of cultural guardian, and, not unrelatedly, guardian of the new social order:

We have not the notion, so familiar on the Continent and to antiquity, of THE STATE - the nation in its collective and corporate character, entrusted with stringent powers for the general advantage, and controlling individual wills in the name of an interest wider than that of individuals (1938: 75; original emphasis).

Sometime later, once the full sway of industrialization was solidly in place, and it became clear that Arnold's proposals for the administration of culture (and hence the containment of class conflict) through the state were insufficient, literary critics like T.S. Eliot and F.R. Leavis reflected on the cultural changes that had accompanied industrialization and were highly critical of both, more loudly of the former. Their work features the same nostalgic longings for a pre-industrial, non-capitalist society that preoccupied Howe and other American critics in the 1950s; in both cases, these sentiments provided the (weak) basis for a critique of industrial capitalism. The English critics held little stock in the capacity of the bourgeoisie to overcome the "pallid, mechanical, life-denying civilization" that seemed part of the industrialization package (see Swingewood, 1977: 2-10).

Eliot's Notes Towards a Definition of Culture (1962) is exemplary. Here Eliot espoused the view that since culture is inevitably stratified, it ought to be stratified according to "a continuous gradation of cultural levels" (1962: passim). The concept of culture was organic, i.e. the culture of every individual flows from his/her membership of specific groups and classes, which in turn depend for their culture on the whole social order; culture is, therefore, a way of life and all societies witness some form of common culture. Each national culture contains a variety of local cultures which therefore ensure unity and diversity within the whole. Nevertheless, working class institutions and ideals, above all socialist ideals, must be assimilated by the dominant culture. This Eliot made very clear.

Leavis, in Mass Civilization and Minority Culture, written in 1930, accepted that "culture was at a crisis" and blamed mechanization for destroying a genuine "common culture" with widely shared moral assumptions. Like Eliot, Leavis stressed the importance of tradition in the life of a culture and its basis in the "organic community". He rued the demise of some pre-industrial, conflict-free period, the "Old England" where work was meaningful and workers "could, without a sense of oppression, bear with long hours and low pay" (1930: 3-5); see also Leavis and Thompson, 1942: 68-91). In light of Leavis' concern with folk culture, with a common culture that includes the everyday experience of common people within a morally binding community, it is possible to see his legacy to the later concerns of cultural studies. It is also possible to see the theoretical links between Leavis' 'critique of capitalism' and the post-war American 'critique of mass society'.

Williams argues, however, that Leavis' concern with folk culture idealizes feudal, not modern, social relations and attempts to "attach humane feelings to pre-capitalist culture, whereas the historical reality

was of a hard and brutal world dominated by illiteracy, superstition, servility, squalor, and poverty" (1975: 48-51; see also Bigsby, 1976: 16). Williams' own critique of mass society theory and other bourgeois sociologies is most recently set forth in Marxism and Literature (1977), where he argues that the bourgeois concept of 'mass communications' and the related radical concept of 'mass manipulation' both need to be re-worked, if not completely replaced with terms that more cogently specify the movement of hegemony. It is suggested that the concept of the 'mass' has served to merely replace and neutralize the specificity of class structures, while the preoccupation with 'manipulation' has stifled any understanding of the phases of social consciousness that "correspond to real social situations and relations" (1977: 136-137). Attention now turns briefly to the earlier work of Williams himself and to one other equally important figure in the formation of the new cultural studies: Richard Hoggart.

(ii) Hoggart, Williams, and the 1950s

The importance of the literary criticism tradition carries through to the work of Hoggart, which continued that "certain studied romanticism" (Bigsby, 1976: 24) of the English literary approach. Hoggart replaced the conservative nostalgia of Arnold and his descendants with a liberal nostalgia; although, like Leavis, Hoggart argued that a standardized mass culture had overtaken a fractured "urban culture of the people". To Hoggart, working class culture (and he freely made this association) is precisely the same urban local culture of tightly knit communities, where myth, ritual, superstition, fatalism, and short-term hedonism occupy positions of centrality in everyday life. Hoggart's approach to culture is highly selective, impressionistic, and divorces the working class from its position within the division of labour and its place in production

relations. We might also note the absence of any discussion about the role of ideology in the configuration of popular consciousness. The concept of culture is static and passive, and denies culture its active, historical character. Culture is reduced to a series or list of adaptive mechanisms adopted by the working class to ward off the alienation of urban capitalist life. Moreover, the analysis in The Uses of Literacy (1957) deals strictly with superficial aspects of working class existence and is heavily imbued with Hoggart's own romantic reminiscences of his working class youth.<sup>10</sup>

Unlike Hoggart, Raymond Williams (the early Culture and Society Williams) offers a more radical approach, yet he still follows Leavis and Eliot and defines culture as an organic, co-operative, and collaborative activity. To Williams, "culture is ordinary" and working class culture is "a basic collective idea, and the institutions, manners, habits of thought and intentions which proceed from this" (1958: 313-314). Like Leavis, this early Williams argues explicitly against Marxist interpretations when he suggests that working class institutions contribute to social growth through their contributions to the development of a common culture. Needless to say, this proposition eliminates all contradiction and conflict, and divests culture of any role in class domination. There is no theorization about cultures in conflict with each other, only "a destructured and static model (where) culture is defined in terms of meanings" (Swingewood, 1977: 43). Furthermore, culture obviously cannot be reduced to (or summed up in) a directory listing of habits, customs, and rituals. If culture is to be understood as a way of life, then it must indeed be understood, in Williams' widely-subscribed phrase, as a WHOLE way of life, and not merely a way of "coping with capitalism".

Above all, culture needs to be understood inside a historical account of class struggle and explained vis-a-vis class interests, through the historical development of classes and class fractions. Some evidence that Williams has now come to recognize this inadequacy appears in Marxism and Literature where he attempts to sketch out the direction of his comparatively recent "embrace" of Marxism<sup>11</sup> for a "Marxist cultural sociology" that would be "recognizable, in its simplest outlines, in studies of different types of institution and formation in cultural production and distribution, and in the linking of these within whole social material processes" (1977: 138). Nevertheless, Williams' embrace of Marxism has yet to come full circle: a more faithfully Marxist analysis should not feel it necessary to 'link' culture with material processes -- it should START WITH the realization that culture is, itself, a material process.

(iii) Stuart Hall, the Birmingham Centre, and 'cultural studies'

The importance of Hoggart and the early Williams to the work of the Birmingham Centre cannot be underestimated. Sparks (1977), in fact, starts with Hoggart and Williams and takes their legacy as prime to the early and later Centre work. Cultural studies is usually associated with the work of the Centre at Birmingham (established in 1964), although the late 1970s saw its influence blossom rapidly outward to what is now a whole network of centres (within Britain and without) that follow or attempt to follow the approach. The kind of 'cultural studies' that came to be practiced at the Birmingham Centre was very much an outgrowth of the English tradition of literary criticism (tellingly enough, the Centre was originally subsumed within the Department of English Literature at Birmingham University) and, in many ways, it still has not managed to get beyond the literary and the textual. Sparks even suggests that

"cultural studies took over the total project of Literary Criticism" (1977: 18) with one crucial qualification; namely, the way in which the old opposition of high and low culture was overturned and now understood. While the early conceptualizations of culture remained largely intact, the reverence of Arnold, Leavis, et al. for bourgeois culture was supplanted with a new reverence for working class culture (heavily inspired by Hoggart) that amounts to a kind of perverse elitism. Otherwise, as Sparks observes, there is not a great deal to distinguish the cultural conceptions of the Centre and those of (classical) English literary criticism.

One of the decisive developments at work was a rejection of once-dominant aesthetic definitions of culture (e.g. the 'sweetness and light' that constituted Arnold's vision) and a movement towards anthropological conceptions, with a new focus on the community, especially the urban working class community, as the place where culture is practiced or 'lived' as a relation (note the Althusserian reference). The model represented in Arnold and other liberal versions began with a sharp separation between 'work' and 'culture', thereby discarding determination at the outset, and substituting the vague, empty, and non-contradictory notion of 'commodity'. According to Sparks (1977: 18-22):

That false resolution ... was in fact taken over wholesale by cultural studies. Within that fundamental separation the conception of culture was once again reified to exclude any reference to social antagonism ... the ground was well prepared for a Marxism which systematically evaded the squalid concerns of political parties, trade unions, and all the rest of the baggage of Marxist orthodoxy, and which elevated debates on culture, epistemology, etc., to the centre of theoretical concern.

Similarly, as Sparks argues, the Centre's so-called 'encounter with Marxism' (and this description seems appropriate) is highly problematic. At the surface level, it is evident in the rather marked changes in the



nature of the work produced at the Centre throughout the late 60s and 70s (it's possible to trace these changes through the successive issues of the Working Papers in Cultural Studies, the Centre's journal), whereas at a more fundamental level the transformation to a full-fledged legitimate Marxism is still incomplete. Indeed, one might well argue that such a total transformation can never be realized, that it was stymied at the start by the historical and epistemological traps that the Centre inherited from literary criticism. This is not to say that cultural studies did not have its own very noble beginnings and intentions. Take, for example, Hall's early statement of the Centre's objectives, part of the introduction to the first issue of the Working Papers: "it has been one aim of the Centre to rescue the concept of "culture" itself from its reified form" (1971: 6). Hall enlists the aid of Williams to set in motion this "de-reification", enumerating Williams' three meanings outlined in The Long Revolution (1965). The discussion is worth quoting at some length, since it represents one of the few clear and precise statements of the Centre's original (and, some would argue, still current) conceptualization of what culture is and where it is to be found:

Culture, (Williams) suggested, can refer to 'the description, in lives and works, of those values which can be seen to compose a timeless order, or to have permanent reference to the universal human condition'; it can refer to the 'body of intellectual and imaginative work in which, in a detailed way, human thought and experience are variously recorded'; or it can refer to the 'description of a particular way of life, which expresses certain meanings and values, not only in art and learning but also in institutions and ordinary behaviour'. Our own approach, while drawing on all three of those definitions, adheres most closely to the third. From this perspective, culture is the way social life is experienced and handled, the meanings and values which inform human action, which are embodied in and mediate social relationships, political life, etc. (1971: 6).

This is all well and good, as it stands. It is quite another thing, however, to go on to argue, in the next breath, that this conceptualization "returns



culture to its root in the soil of specific historical and social situations (and) restores the dimension of meaning and praxis to the sphere of human action" (1971: 6). The meaning of culture that Hall identified and adopts simply does not stand up to the grand claims of his next statement. There is a logical (or illogical) leap in the argument, one that carried disastrous results for the way that culture came to be approached through the Centre's subsequent work, and one that facilitated their (false) claim to a Marxist analysis of culture.

The falsity of their claim can be at least partially understood through a consideration of the changed (and rapidly changing) politico-practical position of Centre members, and more generally, of the dislocation of the intellectual through the course of the accelerated rationalization of British higher education during the 1960s and onward. No discussion here could do full justice to the complexities of these developments or their implications for the state of British Marxism. Sparks' discussion of "the new mood of 1968" and "the creation of a new labour aristocracy structurally dependent upon the state machine" (1977: 18-24), Garnham's discussion of "the intellectualist fallacy" (1979), and Anderson's broader discussion of changes within European Marxism during the same period (1976), should all be consulted. Briefly, it meant, in the work of Centre members and others, a movement towards pure theoreticism (spelled out, for example, in the pages of the popular and extremely influential journal Screen); a movement that signifies a very real obstruction to the development of a Marxist cultural analysis (see later discussion). Sparks concludes his account with the cleverly cryptic observation that "given this political and intellectual impasse the popularity of Louis Althusser in British was, one might say, overdetermined" (1977: 22).

Prior to the appropriation of Althusser, however, there is a third influence that intervenes in the early Centre work, namely Edward Thompson's 'cultural history' of the English working class (1963). It is particularly noticeable in their studies of "working class communities" (see, for example, Lidia Curtis et al., 1973), and was concretized in the formation of the "cultural history" sub-group during the mid-seventies. This work, too, started out with worthwhile intentions. There was the initial rejection of the abstract, ahistorical use of the word "culture" in the singular (since, among other problems, it implied some non-existent culture-in-general) and an attempt to give culture, or rather cultures, "a more concrete historical reference" (CCCS, 1976-78: 5-6). One such project, for example, detailed the evolution of post-war youth sub-cultures and was subsequently published in the form of Resistance Through Rituals (Hall and Jefferson, 1976). Curiously, though, the work reads more like the approach of Thompson in The Making of the English Working Class (1963), where 'culture' (not 'cultures') is subjected to historical investigation, and where culture was viewed rather idealistically and class itself was said to happen "when some men, as a result of common experiences, feel and articulate the identity of their interests" (see the important preface, 1963: 9; emphasis added).

While it is rightful to recognize that "a historical perspective lends a necessary specificity to the study of cultures" (CCCS, 1976-78: 6), it is not enough to therefore pose "questions of cultural power and hegemony, of domination and subordination through the exercise of cultural power, and the transmission of cultural skills and competence" (CCCS, 1976-78: 6-7). There is far more to the potency of bourgeois hegemony than simply things cultural, which points to their basic misappropriation of Gramsci's writings (highlighted in their discussion

of the Prison Notebooks: see Hall, Lumley, & McLennan, 1977). This type of approach to the study of either culture or cultures necessarily elevates the object of analysis to the level of concerns about ideology and consciousness, and severs these concerns from things economic and broadly political; it consequently poses a serious contradiction between intent and result in the work of the Centre. One can look more recently, for example, to Richard Johnson's comparative study of the traditions represented by the works of Thompson and Althusser, where Johnson admits that "Thompson's sole and explicit criterion for the existence of class concerns forms of consciousness and collective action or organization: in the Making class is seen as a wholly political and cultural category" (1979: 65) and yet he still goes on, in conclusion, to "insist on the need to retain culture ideology as a couplet, where culture is understood as a ground or RESULT OF THE WORK OF IDEOLOGIES" (1979: 75; emphasis added). While it is perhaps unfair to rob this conclusion of its context in the text of the article, it is nevertheless lucidly illustrative of what remains a fundamentally non-materialist conceptualization of culture in the work of the Birmingham Centre.

A fourth and later influence in the development of cultural studies marks a strong attraction to work carried out in France and elsewhere on the continent. Of the three neo-Marxist thinkers (Althusser, Gramsci, and Poulantzas) whose work touched off and accentuated the Centre's concern about ideology theories (see, for example, Working Papers in Cultural Studies 10, 1977 and the more widely distributed version, On Ideology, 1978), Althusser's work, especially the "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" or 'ISAs essay', occupied the most central place.<sup>12</sup> Importantly, the interest in Althusser occurred not long after Thompson's work had left its mark, and it is revealing to consider the similar

origins and motives of the two writers. Both Althusser and Thompson set out to establish positions that would stand firmly opposed to Stalinist and exonomistic tendencies in Marxist work,<sup>13</sup> both formulated their early arguments during a period of cold war hostility, and both attempted to transcend or evade that hostility by developing (in very different ways, of course) Marxist work on non-economic questions (see Johnson, 1979: 57ff). This last commonality is absolutely vital, for it came to be true, tragically, that these works set the direction for most subsequent work on culture and ideology. At this circumstantial moment in European intellectual history the concerns of at least the next decade were firmly grounded, even though the pressing need to polemicize against Stalinist tendencies had long since been removed. Somehow, through the course of later developments in cultural theory, the (ordinarily crucial) concern with the economic was never re-inserted into its proper place, and soon fell into a state of serious neglect.

Without engaging impractically in a full-scale treatise on the relation between Althusserian structuralism and new currents in British Marxism, it is at least possible to briefly summarize some of the most commonly identified weaknesses to be found in Althusser's work on ideology. The usual complaints include the functionalist charges (particularly with respect to his discussion of the system-functions of the ISAs), the internal inconsistencies, the too omnipotent role that is accorded to the state, and, notably, the over-emphasis on reproduction. A major problem regarding the ISAs essay in particular is that, although subtitled "Notes Towards an Investigation" and including Althusser's own admission that "we are advancing in still poorly explored domains" (1971: 269), this single, crude and abbreviated 'exploratory' discussion has been appropriated as a fully-fledged 'theory of ideology'. Not only

does Althusser fail to provide a comprehensive, adequate or even workable theory of ideology, or of the state (although it may be unfair to assess his work against this misread intention), his 'notes' about the state and about ideology, taken together, contain some serious and by now well-acknowledged faults.

Sumner (1979) makes the point that the one-sided concept of ideological reflection has left a persistent perception of ideological transmission FROM ABOVE and ONLY from above, such that, in order to proceed with his argument for the role of the state as the agent of ideological domination, Althusser is compelled to deny the existence of contradictions or practices that might give rise to non-ruling class ideologies, which traps him inside a non-dialectical analysis. Only later does Althusser realize that the emergence of the ISAs and the dominance of ruling class ideologies within them, is possible only through class struggle within the ISAs (e.g. within legal and educational institutions). However, through the artificial insertion of contradictions into the analysis, Althusser reduces ideologies to class ideologies, and hence short-forms the rich and complex ensemble of ideological formations. No longer is it possible to discuss class fractions or class alliances and their subscription to contending ideologies, a relation that becomes lost to analysis forever.

To Sumner (see, in particular, 1979: 25-50, 101-130), Althusser's class reductionism is a serious theoretical limitation: it precludes the understanding of ideological differences that divide or cut across classes, and this is especially problematic since, according to Sumner, these intra-class rivalries and ideological struggles hold the greatest political import for contemporary Marxist analysis. All of these inadequacies, intrinsic to Althusser's theoretical 'notes' about ideology, are uncritically overlooked and hence systematically 'reproduced' in the

Birmingham work on cultures and ideologies. The last important point to note about the absorption of Althusser into cultural studies, however, is that their uncritical (mis)appropriation effectively and solidly wedged the Centre further into the trap of abstract theoreticism.

There is always a danger, in general discussions like the present one, that a review of a given body of literature can appear to attribute a monolithic character to the material. This is in fact somewhat justified in the case of the Centre's work, which is largely collaborative and rarely authored by a single individual, reflecting the organization of the Centre as a uniquely democratic collective and its preference for co-operative, rather than competitive, intellectual activity. (Indeed, outside observers often comment on its 'cult-like' operation). In this sense, charges of theoreticism can be levelled at more than just this or that 'tendency' in the studies of one or more individuals. Mention should be made, however, of some peripheral and 'exiled' Birmingham thinkers who do manage to escape the theoreticist trap. Paul Willis and Dave Morley exemplify the few who pursue more substantive questions: the relation between formalized education, cultural production, and the reproduction of labour power in Willis' case (1977), and the stratification of audience readings in Morley's case (1975, 1980). Willis, for example, acknowledges that trade unions are "by far the most important working class institution", and Sparks notes that this acknowledgement alone "marks an important advance for an institution which, while dedicated to the study of working class culture has not, as yet, produced any major study, either theoretical or empirical, of the trade union movement" (1977: 27-28). Regardless, Sparks holds out little hope for an approach that disregards the contradictory nature of these same working class institutions: "if it is agreed that the culture we are



studying is that of a subordinate class, and that this subordination is something which can be ended, then it follows that a great deal of contemporary working class culture is an historically transient formation" (1977: 28).

One of the problems that rendered the Birmingham and Screen work openly susceptible to charges of theoreticism was its operation in a field traditionally weak in one important sense. Cultural studies was, for some time during its formative period, an 'approach' without a methodology. Literary criticism could offer little on that score, and so for its methodological impetus the Centre turned once more to the continent and to European structuralism and semiotics, the fifth and latest influence that directs their work. This move, it can be argued, did little more than complicate or add to the existing problems of method. Again, it is not possible to demonstrate the full consequences within the limits of this discussion; only a few illustrative points can be made. Murdock and Golding (e.g. 1977, 1978, 1979, 1980), Summer (1979: 131-203), and others have carried out sustained critiques of the methodological faults endemic to 'immanent structural' or semiotic analysis. The former, for example, concede that the approach has opened wide the field of potential objects of analysis to include art, literature, religion, cosmetic fashions, bodily gestures, and many other everyday symbolic forms: "in a field where people are still apt to regard contemporary culture as more or less synonymous with television programming, this contextualization represents a considerable gain in breadth" (1978: 348).

Problems arise, however, when one attempts to unravel the significance of these symbolic forms through the use of immanent structural analysis. Murdock and Golding argue that the epistemological and



methodological principles of the approach irrevocably lead to "a highly asymmetric analysis in which an elaborate anatomy of symbolic forms sits alongside a schematic and incomplete account of social processes" (1978: 349). In other words, there are degrees of contextualization, and cultural studies, however ambitious in its range, has not achieved the greatest degree that it might. To some, this potential is unrealizable: Murdock and Golding, operating within a more orthodox perspective, see no way out, and conclude that "textual and sociological analyses are rooted in fundamentally opposed approaches to the study of culture and ... eventually a choice must be made between the two" (1978: 351). The later, and very different, Williams seems to opt for the latter. In a landmark New Left Review article (1973) that in many ways marks the point of his rupture with earlier theoretical affiliations, Williams asserts that "we have to break from the notion of isolating the object and then discovering its components. On the contrary, we have to discover the nature of a practice and then its conditions" (1973: 16). And, in a 1974 work, Television: Technology and Cultural Form, Williams reiterates the need for a greater degree of contextualization:

To say that television is now a factor in socialization, or that its controllers and communicators are exercising a particular social function, is to say very little until THE FORMS OF THE SOCIETY which DETERMINE any particular socialization and which allocate the function of control and communication have been precisely specified (1974: 120; emphasis added).

Critiques of immanent structural or semiotic analysis most often cite the following major weaknesses of the method: (1) its insistence on the immanent revelations of cultural texts; (2) its inductive epistemological principles; (3) its impressionistic, 'subjective', and inferential nature; (4) its unreplicable (and hence unverifiable) character; (5) its too weighted reliance on the ingenuity of the

individual analyst; and (6) its necessary ahistoricism. Sumner, however, argues that these weaknesses are not immutable, and attempts to salvage the more worthy traits of the approach through his proposals for a "historical materialist semiology" (1979: 207-245). Although still tentative and cumbersome (see the four 'approximations' and their attendant empirical contingents, 1979: 238-245), Sumner's approach contrasts sharply with the enthusiastic Birmingham adoption of the study of the text for the sake of the text.

Indeed, the new currency of debates about authorship represents an alarming 'sign' of further and future over-subscriptions to French structuralism, and especially the new 'post-structuralism' (represented by Derrida, Kristeva, et al.), which is content not only to decompose a text with blind disregard to its material sources and conditions, but to decompose the text FOR THE SAKE OF ANALYSIS ITSELF, and not for the sake of revealing its politico-ideological implications. This is tantamount to "deconstruction for the hell of it", as Norman Snider so pointedly expressed it in, significantly, a recent edition of his 'Trends' column (Globe & Mail, 20 September, 1980). Even those who still perceive their work as part of and contributory to larger politico-practical objectives, still limit their analytical range to the text itself in their explanations (if included) of social process. Murdock and Golding rightfully question the capacity of social texts to reveal all that there is to cultural production and reproduction. Their damning critique of semiotics suggests that what is at stake here is much more than a problem of method:

... it is not just a question of devising more adequate modes of textual analysis and applying them to a comprehensive range of media output ... there is a fundamental methodological difficulty in approaching social and structural relations

through the analysis of texts. However well conceived and executed, textual readings remain a variety of content analysis and as such they suffer from the familiar but intractable problem of inference. It is one thing to argue that all cultural forms contain traces of the relations of production underlying their construction, and of the structural relations which surround them. It is quite another to go on to argue that an analysis of form can deliver an adequate and satisfactory account of these sets of relations and of the determinations they exert on the production process. They can't. In our view the sociology of culture and communication HAS BEEN SERIOUSLY INCAPACITATED by the tendency of over-privilege texts as objects of analysis (1979: 206-207; emphasis added).

What is most alarming about the new 'trend' towards post-structuralist semiotics is that it represents a fundamental inversion of the principles of historical materialism, and yet it operates under the guise of 'Marxist' cultural theory. Rather than refer to these developments as 'neo-' or even 'post-' Marxism, we might more properly identify the latest theoretical fashions as a kind of anti-Marxism. Who better to illustrate this point than Marx himself:

It is, in reality, much easier to discover by analysis the earthly core of the misty creations of religion, than, conversely, it is to develop from the actual relations of life the corresponding celestialized forms of those relations. The latter method is the only materialistic, and therefore the only scientific one (1967: 352n).

#### Conclusions: Towards a Materialist Analysis of Culture

Despite the promise of the new conception of culture as 'a whole way of life', culture is still treated as a realm apart, both by literary-structural theorists and by more orthodox thinkers. On one side, traditional notions have been extended to encompass a wide range of cultural commodities and symbolic forms; on the other, culture is still separated from work and reduced, in essence, to life styles and not life ways. Both traditions have contributed to the further reification of the concept, abstracted it from the web of social relations, and transformed it into a monolithic notion of not just 'culture as a whole' but 'culture as a whole realm of social life' and therefore, somehow, separable

from other material productions. Meanwhile, mass society theorists (including 'culture industry' theorists) start with a moralistic observation that 'culture' is disintegrating, and proceed to centre entirely on their abstract, ungrounded notion of culture rather than on the specific determinations and historical configurations of cultures within capitalism. The result is "a crude "consumptionist" theory of culture in which subjective judgement and moral evaluation dominate to the exclusion of scientific analysis" (Swingewood, 1977: xi). This underlines even more the need to locate culture by first looking towards production, and by conceptualizing culture itself as first and foremost a material production.

In contrast, all of the approaches discussed start out with either a firm rejection of exasperation with, or sheer desertion of, the principles of materialist analysis, and some, as we have seen, arrive at either an implicitly anti-Marxist or (at best) quasi-Marxist stance. Such categorizations, and the general profusion of labels that attempt to identify the various strands of thought, reflect the current state of theoretical confusion about culture. At least three critical and inter-related problems occupy the current debates: those of mediation, of agency, and of determination. The consequences of the first two of these have already been noted, and therefore greater attention must now be paid to the problem of determination itself.

The conditions that led these problems to attain their acute significance for contemporary cultural theorists are suggested throughout the discussion. Anderson (1976), however, more broadly contextualizes the developments. According to his account, the "organic unity of theory and practice" realized in the generation of pre-WWI Marxists suffered a serious rupture during the five decades between 1918 and 1968. The political forces that came into play following the first World War (e.g.

Fascism and Stalinism) served to sever the bond between theory and practice and to scatter and suppress certain key theorists like Gramsci, Korsch, and Lukacs. From this point forward, the possibilities for a lively and dynamic exchange of Marxist thought, one informed by concrete political practice, were seriously diminished. Moreover, after 1920, most major theoretical works were produced in a context of political isolation and (often) defeatist despair, including: Lukacs' History and Class Consciousness (1923), written during his period of exile in Austria; Gramsci's notes, compiled during his imprisonment under Mussolini's triumphant fascism; the early works of the Frankfurt theorists, written under the conditions of German fascism; Marcuse's Eros and Civilization (1954), produced in the era of McCarthyism in the United States; and Sartre's Critique of Dialectical Reason (1960), which appeared following the Gaullist coup of 1958. Anderson concludes that "the hidden hallmark of Western Marxism as a whole is thus that it is a product of DEFEAT" (1976: 42; original emphasis).

One painful consequence of the impasse brought about by these conditions became "the studied silence of Western Marxism in those areas most central to the classical traditions of historical materialism" (1976: 44); notably, analysis of economic changes within the developing capitalist mode of production, of the significance of the growing state machine, and of the ongoing class struggles within capitalist societies. At the same time, the post-war capitalist economic boom, and with it the global consolidation of capital all around the industrialized world, signalled a new phase of capitalism that seemed to undermine the classical account of its inevitable decline, and posed instead a 'crisis' for Marxist analysis. In light of these circumstances, the appearance of Althusser's works during the 1960s, and their widespread influence, is

readily comprehensible. Althusser's reformulations of the classic Marxist precepts (e.g. the crucial concept of "structural causality" of a mode of production in Reading Capital, and the concept of a social totality "determined in the last instance" by one preponderant level within it, which in itself blew open the whole surge of functionalist attacks, and deservedly so), undermined the already weakened vitality of classical political economy, and led to an inordinate amount of concentration on the study of superstructures, in which analyses of culture and ideology rose to unwarranted prominence. Furthermore, there are those who argue (e.g. Mrudock and Golding, 1979) that ultimately the most dreadful implication of Althusser's work was its final and definitive eradication of one of the core, distinguishing features of historical materialism; namely, the real and ever-present determination of the economic.

The sole outstanding exception to these otherwise pervasive tendencies is represented in the work of one of the last great 'politically informed' Marxist theorists: Gramsci. It is particularly remarkable in that Gramsci's work also concentrated on the study of superstructures, yet "unlike any other theorist in Western Marxism he took the autonomy and efficacy of cultural superstructures as a POLITICAL problem, to be explicitly theorized as such - in its 'relationship to the maintenance or subversion of the social order'" (Anderson, 1976: 78; original emphasis). This is the critical difference, although popular misappropriations of his work have themselves 'subverted' the distinctiveness of his approach to culture, and the cryptic nature of his writings has obstructed a clear understanding of their theoretical significance. The construction of a comprehensive Gramscian approach to the study of culture would no doubt be a massive, yet not impossible, project; it would need to take into account and piece together all of the observations about culture (and



ideology) dispersed throughout the voluminous prison notes. The project is made all the more massive by the recent availability of the first English translation of some of the early political writings (Gramsci, 1977, 1978).<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, in order to fulfill the requirements of a materialist analysis of culture, we might usefully start with Gramsci's seminal works.

It is a tribute to his unique insights that Gramsci, at a very early historical stage, recognized the dangers of and understood the developments behind the growth of idealist elements within Marxist theory:

... the currents which have attempted combinations of the philosophy of praxis with idealist tendencies consist for the most part of 'pure' intellectuals, whereas the current which has constituted the orthodoxy consisted of intellectual personalities more markedly dedicated to practical activity and therefore more closely linked to the great popular masses (1971: 389).

Part of the explanation for this insight lies in Gramsci's frequent polemics against the idealism of Croce, his chief opponent in the local Italian debate. In a similar vein, Gramsci also recognized the overriding problem of determination, and insisted that "it is the problem of the relations between structure and superstructure which must be accurately posed and resolved if the forces which are active in the history of a particular period are to be correctly analyzed, and the relations between them determined" (1971: 177).

With respect to this overriding problem, Garnham (1979) has helpfully identified the roots of the debate about determination in his search for congruities between the work of Screen and historical materialism. In the first place, the imbalanced concern with ideology and culture has placed traditional understandings of determination in doubt.

... the economic is determinant in certain historically specific ways, i.e. each one of us would literally starve



to death unless we entered into this structure of economic relationships. The same cannot be said of many so-called superstructural activities which are in this sense, relatively autonomous, relatively matters of free choice (1979: 125).

Garnham argues that this straightforward distinction has been inflated beyond reason, and that this can be understood in terms of the relatively privileged position of intellectuals within modern relations of production; hence their susceptibility to confusions about determination. The argument suggests that, as a first step towards a materialist approach, we need to remove culture, or at least ideology, from its position of centrality in 'Marxist' thought and work. It may mean, for example, looking for 'culture' in hitherto unlikely places, i.e. inside factories and offices and not just in working or middle class neighbourhoods, and making sense of the findings not with the dubious aid of Althusserian 'theories', but with reference to substantive works like, for example, Beynon's Working for Ford (1973) or Thompson's research on the problems encountered in introducing the notion of regulated working hours in the early moments of industrialization (1967).

A second source of the confusion about determination lies in the associated (and, some would argue, 'manufactured') problem of 'levels', brought on in part by Althusser's re-reading of Capital. In a valiant effort to "bring back the dialectic", Garnham argues forcefully that the whole notion of levels is a false one. Discussions of "levels of the social formation" tend to (incorrectly) specify "discrete areas of concrete social practice (e.g. the economic is material production and circulation, the ideological is concerned with ideas and cultural forms, the political concerned with political parties, the state and so on). On the contrary, levels are not actual social practices but analytically distinct perspectives upon concrete social phenomena which are at one

and the same time economic, ideological, and political" (1979: 129).

A third source of trouble traces to the widely perceived limitations of the classic equation between ideology and false consciousness as well as the opposition between real relations and phenomenal forms, on the basis of which many cultural theorists instantly dismiss Marx as a source of theoretical insight into the workings of ideology and culture. Yet, as Granham points out:

All that historical materialism posits is that economic class positions produce one set of positions as an average or probabilistically, rather than another. It then sometimes goes on to argue that the gap precisely between the real and 'reality' or between economic relations and phenomenological forms makes possible a disjunction between the real interests and a false consciousness of those interests. It does not necessarily ... then make ideology merely 'the misleading phenomenal form of the real movement'. It claims that, because there is mediation (or relative autonomy or disjuncture or indeed whatever word or theoretical construct one uses to describe the manifestly obvious and anciently attested fact that there is a difference between the real and its representation) there is a possibility of misunderstanding. But it does depend ... upon an assumption of the primacy and determinacy of the real ... Marx certainly, and I believe, Marxism, rests upon the ultimate primacy of the real (1979: 126-127).

Granham's defense is quoted at length here, since it marks a rare type of intervention into the current debates of Marxist cultural theory. On a more optimistic note, there is some recent evidence that oppositions of this nature are on the increase (see, for example, the debate between Coward (1979), and Chambers et al. (1979). In the interests of a maturing materialist approach to the study of culture, such interventions must be heartily welcomed.

## NOTES

1. The unique position of Walter Benjamin vis-a-vis other members of the institute for Social Research is still a subject of debate (see later discussion), and hence the theoretical cohesion suggested by the phrase 'the Frankfurt school' renders its usage somewhat inappropriate.
2. Horkheimer died in 1973. The quotation derives from a letter written to Martin Jay in 1971, subsequently published as the forward to Jay's account of the Institute (1973).
3. A problematic feature of mass society theory is this limited attention to these three media and its relative neglect of other significant culture industries and cultural forms (literature, drama, newspapers, magazines, theatre, etc.).
4. The material imperatives that determined the direction of much American 'mass communications' research are by now well known. The needs of the U.S. private radio industry for some knowledge of its broadcast markets and the requirements of war-time propaganda each figured within the development of the dominant modes of media empiricism. Several leading figures within this tradition were directly employed by private audience research agencies or private research foundations linked to the media industries. In addition, Hovland directed the research branch of the U.S. Army's Information and Education Division (see Golding and Murdock, 1978).
5. Innis' theory is introduced in Empire and Communications (1972) and further developed in The Bias of Communication (1951). Related works include Changing Concepts of Time (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1952) and The Strategy of Culture (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1952).
6. See Carey (1968) for evidence that McLuhan's 'borrowings' from Innis were more than substantial, verging on sheer plagiarism.
7. Their limited utility is illustrated in the fact that few studies have followed or attempted to develop the tradition further. A notable exception is Carpenter's Oh, What a Blow That Phantom Gave Me! (1976). His idle musings, however fascinating to read, demonstrate the impressionistic and fundamentally non-analytical nature of McLuhan's formulations about culture.
8. Keynote address, 11th Annual Conference of the Canadian Association for American Studies, Waterloo, Ontario, 22-25 October 1973.
9. The phrase 'cultural studies' is preferred to 'cultural Marxism' (as some refer to the approach), for reasons that will become apparent.

10. Hoggart shared the anxieties and lived the contradictions of other British working class academics of the 1950s who moved upward through the academy during the post-war expansion of higher education, and, like the others, was compelled by a need to 'settle accounts' with his class origins. The Uses of Literacy should be read in this light.
11. It is indicative of 'the new Williams' that statements like the following appear in the latest text: "It is in practice impossible to separate the development of the novel as a literary form from the highly specific economics of fiction publication" (1977: 137) -- a far cry indeed from the young literary critic of the 1950s.
12. In a revealing admission, Johnson notes that the ISAs essay "has been massively influential, defining, for many readers, the actual terrain of "materialism"" (1979: 58).
13. That Thompson's motives in the production of Making were largely polemical is disclosed in the following excerpt from a recent interview: "The Making of the English Working Class undoubtedly arose from a two-sided theoretical polemic. On the one hand it could not have been written without the extremely firmly, intellectually very well-based, discipline of economic history ... it is a tradition largely contaminated with capitalist ideology ... on the other hand it was in a sense a polemic against abbreviated economistic notations of Marxism..." (1976: 4-5).
14. Cavalcanti and Piccone, however, have usefully culled some of the salient writings on culture from these early articles (see Gramsci, 1975: 9-49).

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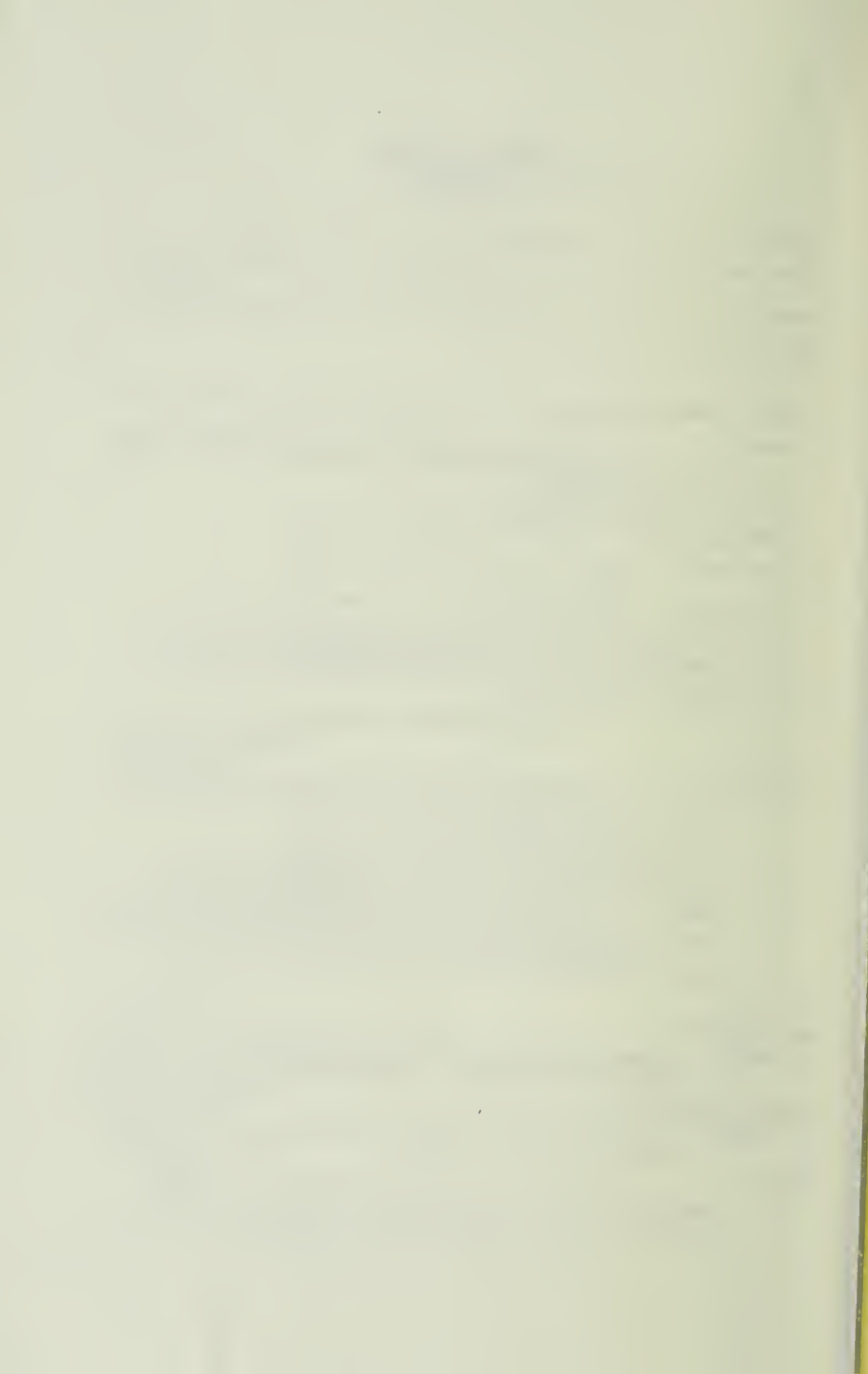
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